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ABSTRACT

The Rural School and Community Trust has made place central to its educational and community-building work. Because the understanding of a place is fundamental to building sustainable communities, Rural Trust schools and communities are committed to providing their children and young people with opportunities to explore, analyze, and contribute to their places. This report explains what learning about place entails and shares practical suggestions and examples of place-based curricula from Rural Trust sites. An introduction sets these efforts in their current and historic social, economic, and political context; outlines common elements that make place-oriented work deep, engaging, and challenging for students; and discusses the design process for a place-based curriculum. Detailed examples are presented: (1) the Selborne Project, in which students focus on many aspects of the square kilometer around their school; (2) cemetery studies in South Dakota and Virginia; (3) interdisciplinary studies, such as a family heritage project in Tennessee, the study of a local stream and its water in Maine, and the Kickapoo River Institute in Wisconsin; (4) studies of the local economy, history, and natural environment in Howard, South Dakota; (5) studies of local renewable energy resources and local artists and artisans in Mendocino, California; (6) development from an oral history project to place-based projects across the curriculum in a south Texas school; and (7) local history projects in Virginia. Some principles are offered for keeping this work going. (SV)

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THE RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRUST

Learning in Place

A Special Report to the Rural School and Community Trust

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May 2000

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THE RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TRUST

Learning in Place

A Special Report to the Rural School and Community Trust

May 2000

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PREFACE

Learning in Place has several important purposes. We begin by introducing the importance of learning in place, connecting the work of schools with what matters in local settings. In the Rural Trust, schooling is about such connections. By providing a variety of examples of place-based learning from various Rural Trust sites, *Learning in Place* is meant to offer possibilities for others to consider. While we haven't provided explicit directions for beginning and sustaining place-based work, we believe the examples make clear enough how the work was started and sustained in various locales representative of Rural Trust sites across the country. The fact that such good work is going on should suggest that it can go on everywhere--even in new forms and with more teacher-student-community engagement. Finally, *Learning in Place* is intended as an historical and philosophical document, setting the current work within a larger context and establishing some of the intellectual/moral educational grounding that inspires and sustains place-based work.

The document grows out of the stories and documents provided by large numbers of Rural Trust teachers, students and community people, various Rural Trust project directors, and all of the Rural Trust stewards--Sylvia Parker, Barbara Poore, Julie Bartsch, Elaine Salinas, José Colchado, Jo Thompson and Alan DeYoung. Without their ongoing interest and commitment, we could not do our work as researchers and documenters. The accounts that are presented were gathered and put together mostly by Carla Fontaine and Polly Ulichny. I want to acknowledge, as well, however, the contributions made by Julie Canniff, Ben Williams and many of our Research Associates working in various field settings--Lauren Sosniak, Richard Landry, Miles Bryant, Candace Cochrane, Connie Titone and Bob Leier.

Our hope is that *Learning in Place* will provide constructive direction to new school-community sites wishing to become part of the work of the Rural Trust, while helping existing sites to deepen their work. We believe that genuine reform in schools depends on people in local settings--teachers, students, parents and community people--assuming the responsibility for charting educational directions, being accountable for assuring that the work of schools is embedded with large public purposes and contributes to children and young people becoming active citizens of their communities. They become active citizens by developing critical skills, being invested in academic work that has meaning beyond the school-house, understanding what it means to become historians, scientists, poets, writers, mathematicians, artists and technologists within their local settings and able to join extended communities beyond their local settings. We trust *Learning in Place* contributes to such ends.

Vito Perrone
May 2000

INTRODUCTION

Learning in Place

The Rural Trust has made place central to its educational and community-building work. This focus represents an attempt to build sustainable, quality relationships among an array of resources in rural communities: schools and communities; young people and elders; livelihoods and the environment; democracy, self-reliance and interdependence. Because the importance of understanding one's place is fundamental to building sustainable communities, Rural Trust schools and communities are committed to providing their children and young people with rich opportunities to explore, discover, analyze, and contribute to their places. As we use the term, *place* can refer to many things: the establishment of identity, historical and cultural heritages, the environment, and local relationships. The work people in Rural Trust settings engage in embodies principles of connecting to and supporting one's local place--economically, historically, culturally and socially.

As work around place has deepened, a richer curriculum has evolved. James Lewicki, an educator engaged in Rural Trust work in Wisconsin, addresses the power of place-based learning as follows:

> A pedagogy of place brings school and community together on a common pathway dedicated to stewardship and life-long learning. It is teaching by using one's landscape, family, and community surroundings as the educational foundation. Significant learning takes place outdoors and in the community. This community expands outward from the local landscape and home, to regional realities, to international issues. In coming to know one's place, one comes to know what is fundamental to all places. Respect and reverence for one's immediate place, land stewardship, gives one respect and reverence for all places.[1]

We offer, in this guidebook, an introduction to what learning about place entails and share practical suggestions and examples of curriculum from a number of Rural Trust sites as well as other related sources. In this way, we hope to inform and support schools committed to utilizing their local settings as learning laboratories and, in so doing, meet the needs of their various communities. We describe a curriculum of place and consider it within an historical, philosophical context. We also offer suggestions from those who are well into the process on how to begin planning learning experiences that focus on place. These examples and suggestions are not intended as recipes or precise steps to follow. In fact, the many examples from diverse sites illustrate the great variety of ways schools and communities have entered into this work. It is this creativity, diversity, and particularity of place that makes each curriculum entry unique.

In Rural Trust sites that have expanded their place-based curricula, students are seen as integral members of, and important resources to the community. This counters much of what results from conventional school-based teaching and learning in which students rarely interact with their surrounding context in the course of their schooling.[2] What has been clear over the past three and a half years is that work around place benefits schools and students while fostering enlarged community interaction.

Before exploring more fully the implementation of a curriculum rooted in place, we wish to set this work within its current and historic social, economic and political context. Centering learning on the immediate setting, expanding one's understanding of the world by working from the familiar and known to what is more distant, and understanding that students must construct their own knowledge to assure deep learning are long established and important educational directions.

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[1] James Lewicki, "Cooperative Ecology & Place: Development of a Pedagogy of Place Curriculum" (Summer 1997). Copies of this booklet may be obtained from James Lewicki, Rt. 3, Box 117, Westby, Wisconsin 54667.

[2] Rural Trust work that is authentic and adds value to the community is often multidisciplinary, going beyond the official, often separated categories that make up traditional curriculum.

An Historical Context

It is important to acknowledge that the Rural Trust's educational focus on active learning around place has a long and successful history. Moreover, the close ties of schools and communities were, at an earlier time, understood as natural.

The formalization of schools around grade levels, textbooks and workbook exercises, along with their disconnections from communities, took firm hold in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, especially in our rapidly growing urban settings. By the end of the century, this urban model had become almost universal. In opposition to this development, however, was a growing progressive education movement that sought a more active school curriculum rooted in the genuine concerns of local settings. John Dewey, who helped inspire this progressive movement, did not believe that schooling could be separated from the surrounding social and economic conditions, seeing them as necessarily connected. He advocated a curriculum rooted in place, that was active, that engaged children and young people around their interests and promoted democratic citizenship. Many schools, both urban and rural, pursued these progressive directions.[3]

Another related influence was the Country Life Movement, organized initially by President Theodore Roosevelt as a means of revitalizing rural communities. Liberty Hyde Bailey, a philosopher, academician and agriculturalist from Cornell University, as chair of the Commission on Country Life, made clear that an effective education should develop out of personal experiences; relate these experiences to a vocation or to a pupil's part in life; and ensure that every school is the natural expression of the community. He wanted to see schools in rural areas without "screwed down seats" and children at work with tools and soil and plants and genuine problems.[4]

A Contemporary Account of Learning in Place

Some more recent curricular and pedagogical efforts that find their roots in earlier progressive thought are present in many Rural Trust curriculum initiatives. Among them are constructivist learning and curriculum, experiential education, community apprenticeships, service learning, environmental and socially responsive education. A pedagogy of place, as realized in Rural Trust work, shares with these more recent educational directions a belief that:

- learning occurs most effectively when an individual is able to relate what he or she already knows to new information;
- constructing new knowledge takes place when a student is actively engaged in grappling with, discovering, experiencing, or manipulating something of personal interest;
- learning fewer things deeply is more important than amassing a large superficial knowledge base of unconnected facts and concepts;
- real, authentic work that impacts and, preferably, improves one's community best prepares students for life beyond school; and
- respect is integral to learning.

Shared Understandings About Teaching and Learning in Place

While there is no "one right way" of teaching and learning in place, some of the most instructive work has engaged students in similar ways. *Some* elements that commonly make place-oriented work deep, memorable, and challenging for students include:

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[3] See Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience 1876-1980* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

[4] See Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Country Life Movement in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1915); William Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (New York: Kennilcat Press, 1974); and Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The State and the Farmer* (New York: Macmillan, 1908).

- Curricula consist of work that extends over time and requires a number of skills and understandings to complete.
- Learning activities take students out of the school and into the community and its environment, bring them into contact with community members, and consist of real work.
- Open-ended, large questions and expectations guide the work. Questions, for example, might ask students to discover new information, integrate it and apply it to their own context and the future of their communities.
- Student work results in tangible products, demonstrates understanding and is publicly presented. Often this product is a service or a contribution to the community or to particular businesses, as in the case of student produced newspapers, student maintained computer networks, or student mentoring of adults learning to use technology.
- Products are communicated in a number of forms--texts, speeches and presentations, artwork, multimedia.
- Student work is seen as real work, not typical school work, and adds value to the community.
- Instruction involves coaching. The teacher and other local experts make contributions that help students accomplish their goals and produce good work. There is also considerable room within the work for student direction in determining tasks, deciding how to do them, and final products.
- Complex products are scaffolded, that is, divided into a series of tasks or accomplishments that teach students skills and concepts needed to answer the large question or questions guiding the work. Classroom and community-based learning occurs in support of what is needed to accomplish a learning activity or create a product.
- Student understanding is assessed regularly through different assessment practices to inform both students and teachers of next steps in teaching and learning.[5]

When these foregoing understandings are put into practice, they appear to transform not only the typical work of schools but the language of learning as well. Students move from passive, observer roles into active, creative roles as they discover information and its relationship to broader spheres. They study history by *becoming* historians of their local towns and the major events which are rarely chronicled in history books. They study science by joining their contextual knowledge with scientific understandings, becoming, in the process, scientists who analyze their watersheds or raise fish for commercial use, or map and document the trees, birds or mammals in their regions. They learn grammar and syntax by producing local newspapers read by those in a local community, and they learn accountability by being asked to share their work at school board meetings, legislative hearings, community meetings and state conventions. As a result of this new role, students demonstrate engagement and interest in work that has real consequences within the world they know.[6] They also acquire a sense of self located in place that can be carried with them into new endeavors and they develop an appreciation for their roots, the life of their communities, and the rural environments that sustain them.[7]

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[5] *The Assessment Monograph: A Special Report to the Rural School and Community Trust,* produced by the Rural Trust Research and Evaluation Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, October, 1999, provides a guide to the use of different assessments in Rural Trust work.

[6] Feedback from students, teachers and parents engaged in this type of work has affirmed this shift in student engagement. Stewards and project directors from a number of sites have attributed the change in student attitudes and involvement to the spreading and deepening of place-based work in individual schools. When more traditional teachers observe the changes in students engaged in place-based work, they are often interested in trying it themselves. In some cases, students put pressure on their teachers to make their learning more real and rooted in place rather than continuing with a more conventional curriculum.

[7] A fuller account of the experiences and rewards gained by students, teachers, and community members forms the basis of *Living and Learning in Rural Schools and Communities: A Report to the Annenberg Rural Challenge* (February 1999). This volume and its accompanying supplement *Lessons from the Field* are available through the

We have seen many examples of place-based work that have become a permanent enhancement to communities--student-run technology services that provide computer systems in the local hospital; environmental work that monitors soil and water quality with students leading advocacy campaigns at the local and regional levels; refurbished historical buildings that house local history museums developed by students; building and maintaining nature and heritage trails that support local recreation and promote tourism--to name but a few. As a result, students become important resources to their communities. We offer below a sampling of place-based examples from various Rural Trust schools and communities.

- Fourth grade students in Henderson, Nebraska are giving PowerPoint presentations to state convention audiences on the research they did on their town as well as performing a play they wrote and produced which is rooted in their local history.
- High school students in Mariposa, California are working with various agencies at Yosemite National Park to conduct ongoing environmental studies important to the Park Service. Some of this work has been published.
- A group of high school students in Weyerhaeuser, Wisconsin manage a business that solar air-dries lumber and is listed in the Wisconsin blue book of federally approved corporations.
- High school students in Lotts Creek, Kentucky are documenting the history of the school and the community through videotaped interviews with elders and a presentation of still photos dating back to the early part of this century.
- Second graders in Berwick, Maine are clearing and helping maintain several miles of nature trails on conservation land adjoining the school.
- A 10th grade student in Packers Bend, Alabama organized and directed the wiring of the high school for computer networking. With the involvement of many students, Packers Bend was the first high school in the state that designed, built and now manages its own computer networking.
- High school students in Clear Lake, South Dakota and Schleicher, Texas produced community web pages for local businesses and agencies that demanded technical expertise, design work and active negotiation with "a client."
- Students from five partner school districts along the Yampa River in northwest Colorado conduct water tests, study sediments, measure pH and provide outside governmental agencies with much needed information about the condition of one of the most biologically intact rivers in the West.
- Elementary school students in Paintsville, Kentucky perform traditional folk songs accompanied by the dulcimer on a local TV station. Stanton, Kentucky elementary students perform bluegrass music and work with the local tourist association to play their music throughout the county.

Rural Trust Research and Evaluation Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, 14 Story Street, 2nd floor, Cambridge, MA 02138 and at the Rural Trust website http://ruraledu.org/

Designing Place-Based Curriculum

A typical beginning to place-based work involves school-based people--teachers and administrators--who see the possibilities of enhanced learning, greater student motivation, and the possibility of sustaining an important way of life in rural communities. The beginnings are often small, involving a few people who are exposed to these possibilities by others engaged in similar work.

An important starting point has been for teachers to consider the largest purposes for the work, what they most want students to learn and how that learning can best serve the community. They can then back up from there to organize activities that will lead to such ends. Often described as "planning backwards," it is a prominent feature for those advocating teaching for understanding. Our experience is that work around place has an organic quality, generally expanding as it develops. This community-based work represents a major shift in teachers' conceptions of teaching because students become designers of their community-serving projects. As a result, teachers' work becomes more responsive and facilitative than directive.

Since the school-community link is a particularly vital component of this work, it has, in a number of settings, been helpful for teachers, students and community people to come together, to begin to think about business, policy, or environmental problems that could use student assistance for collecting information, engaging in scientific research, searching for archival sources, writing proposals, and the like. Community members don't ordinarily think of students as potential resources, nor do school people consider their work as necessarily being relevant to the community, but bringing people together to converse about how schools and communities together might create a better community has proven to be a powerful catalyst to this work.

In some cases, teachers use their curriculum development skills to construct learning experiences related to some of the needs identified, building in the necessary skills and learning to accomplish the goals. How the work evolves, however, depends a great deal on the students and where their interests lead them. In this regard, students must be seen as important resources for work around place.

The place-based curricular examples that follow offer rich possibilities for evolving, expanding and remaining responsive to the local community. Some of the work is at an early stage, some is far along. We thought it was important to provide a range as it is often helpful to look at beginning work and think of possibilities.

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING IN PLACE

The Selborne Project

The Selborne Project in Russell, Pennsylvania and Falconer, New York is based on a curriculum idea developed at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute. Like the Smithsonian Square, a project developed by the Smithsonian and the National Science Foundation, in which students collect science-related data, the Selborne curriculum involves middle school students focusing for six to eight weeks on many aspects of a square kilometer of land surrounding their school.[8] Students survey the area, create inventories of plants and animals, and keep natural history journals, similar to those written by Gilbert White and Henry David Thoreau, filled with sketches, maps, architectural and nature drawings and descriptions of what they observe. In the process they learn how complex and interactive an ecological system really is.[9]

Candace Cochrane, a Research and Evaluation Associate, provided a detailed description of the Selborne work:

> At Russell, the Selborne Project is challenging the students, especially in writing and observation, in developing interpersonal skills with the community, in creativity and visual thinking, in organizing

---

[8] The geographical area of study has been expanded over the years as teachers have become more comfortable with offering a wider array of choices.

[9] Many Rural Trust sites have made use of this NSF/Smithsonian inspired work, generally expanding it to include studies of architecture and physical structures as well as social and human conditions.

and carrying through long-term projects. Time for students to work on their journals and projects in the classroom makes for more in-depth and carefully constructed work.

During Selborne the students are definitely IN their community--exploring its natural environment, talking with community adults, gathering data and writing about architecture, history, ecology and business. Likewise, community members are in the schools volunteering to assist students with their work, accompanying students on their field walks and sharing their knowledge of the community.

The 5th and 6th graders at Russell do "Selborne" together. A major benefit of having the two grades work together is the teaching and/or guiding the 6th graders do for the 5th graders. Also there is a breaking down of social barriers between the "regular" students and the special education students.

For all the students, the thought of searching the Johnny Run, a local stream, for crawfish specimens, drawing monuments in the cemetery, constructing architectural models of the old buildings in town, having their own journal is exciting. And what teacher wouldn't love to take his/her students out of the classroom more often than the occasional field trip?

During Selborne the students have alternating indoor days and outdoor days. Outdoor days are for collecting data in their square kilometer and indoor days are for research or processing that data in either hands-on activities (reproducing in wood the eggs of your assigned bird for instance) or writing assignments.

A sampling of comments from Russell School parents suggests an awareness of how the Selborne project is benefiting their children:

> *It improved my daughter's community awareness and self-esteem, made the concepts she was learning more real.*
>
> *The final project required Dad and Joey to work together.*
>
> *Learning about his environment was meaningful to my son. He was more eager to learn when he was able to make choices.*
>
> *It made him realize that doing small projects in his community can mean a lot to those who live there.*

When I asked 5th graders how Selborne was different from the rest of the school year, one told me that,

> *You couldn't waste time because there is so much to do.*

Another student said that Selborne was good,

> *Because I'm out with my parents sometimes and I'll say "this was the first house built in Russell." You can teach your parents some new stuff. You are actually teaching them something.*

A third student said,

> *You are looking at the flower bed and you've never seen this bug on the leaf before, but now all of a sudden you see all those bugs and birds everywhere. And you're like, "Where did they come from?" You never noticed it before. After you go through Selborne, you see all these things.*

During Selborne, I see animated, even excited teachers. They really enjoy being out in the field with the students. They say they are often learning about the place they live alongside their students. As one teacher said, "The teaching and learning process is just so much more rewarding than sitting in a classroom because it has so much more significance. We go out and observe and explore things and then we come back and write about them. With something that is meaningful to them, the motivation is taken care of." The science teacher added, "you can't do better than go outside and experience science."

Adult volunteers accompany students as they explain their square kilometers. There are parent volunteers and volunteers who are grandparents and there are people who are not connected at all to the students. Several adults who started volunteering when their children were doing Selborne enjoyed it so much that they offered to come back the next year and even the year after that. One adult commented: "I just enjoy being with the kids. And I enjoy learning; every year I keep learning things about the village and nature."

Some parents take time off from work to volunteer during Selborne. It is a way for them to be with their kids in a meaningful situation, to learn what their kids are doing and how they are around their peers and other adults.

Since Selborne began, more businesses request students to visit than there is time for during the eight weeks of the Project. Consequently, the 6th grade continues business tours throughout the school year.

Finally, when I look at the journals, I see the student and not the teacher or the curriculum. I see authentic learning in these journals. The journals demonstrate an understanding about the color and shape of leaves; the parts of insects; how a graph can represent population fluxes; how adjectives can be used to describe butterflies and poems to describe clouds; how to find the hidden history in cemeteries and how to find your way home using a map.

As part of their work, children learn through Selborne to sketch their local landscapes, to really see their community. When the project ends, the students have a portfolio portrait of their place and indirectly of themselves. The sketches have gotten better over time. Again, the fact that children see the work of previous classes helps with this. When the Selborne Project ends for the year, teachers and students display for their parents and community members their journals and the final projects they have made.

Ways of Getting Started

Educators in Rural Trust settings have used multiple entry points to begin their work grounded in place. Some teachers have always incorporated aspects of place in their curriculum and are now realizing that this instinct has a name, a philosophy behind it, and that it connects numerous educators across the country who are espousing the value of grounding students' educational experiences in their local context. In these cases, teachers are asking how place-based learning can substitute for the more remote, textbook learning. Learning about history often starts, for example, with the local context through oral histories of town elders and archival and attic explorations for artifacts that help construct previously undocumented historical accounts; learning about science takes place through observation and analyses of the local environment; art and music are studied and created in local traditions; and language arts are learned by reading local authors, writing about one's life and heritage, or even producing the town newspaper. What seems clear is that once place-based learning begins, valuable contributions become apparent to the community as students engage in vital work that is recognized outside of school. Other teachers, as we noted earlier, have begun their work by going directly to community members and finding out from them how they might envision student work supporting or benefiting their endeavors. Such a direction has lead to students becoming active stewards of their environment, persons offering services to businesses, elders, and local agencies, or collectors of information to be used by scientists, policy makers, and town action committees. Similar directions have occurred as a result of teachers, students or parents becoming engaged in more informal conversations with other local people, learning, in the process, about developing local interests or resources that might contribute to the work of the schools. In settings in which students are already beginning to do some of their work outside of school buildings, such conversations have a natural quality and they become increasingly numerous.

As one engages in this work, one's knowledge of place broadens and deepens. As a result, the possibilities grow. The following inventory of place provides a useful framework for discovering what exists in an area that can serve as a basis for learning. This inventory can be added to over time by different students and shared across schools and communities. It should, of course, be tailored to fit the particular needs of any given place, which is true of all of the suggestions and examples we offer here.

Clifford Knapp offers the following introduction and Environmental Inventory Form.[10] He writes:

> Most teachers are familiar with the teaching aids in their classrooms and inside the school building. When they move outside the school, their awareness of instructional aids sometimes decreases. Inventories are one way to learn more about the available resources for curriculum planning. If teachers know the location of an ant nest on the school grounds, they are more likely to include this observation during a lesson on social insects. If they can trace the electric lines from the classroom to the transformer outside, they will be more likely to include this observation in their electricity lesson plans. Teachers need not know all of the learning resources outside the school, but knowing several will serve as a start for year-round [out-of-school projects].
>
> Inventories can be useful tools for investigating the community, too. After defining the potential learning areas...an inventory can be filled out for each site. Take the inventory to each area and explore it. As new resources are discovered, teachers can take notes of related learning activities, concepts, questions to be answered, and places and people to visit for further information. Involve the students in the inventory process and they will become more aware of their surroundings. Enjoy exploring and discovering the world outside the school ....

Environmental Inventory

Directions

Fill in the blanks and circle the appropriate words that apply. Make notes on other observations, questions and related information.

Inventoried by: ______________________ Date: ______________________

Location: ______________________ State/province: ______________________

Town/City: ______________________ County: ______________________

Latitude: ______________________ Longitude: ______________________

Site size and legal description of boundaries: ______________________

____

Bordering property owners: ______________________

____

Natural resources: ______________________

____

Water areas (including marshes, ponds, lakes, streams [permanent or intermittent], drainage ditches, springs, other): ______________________

____

Tree species: ______________________

Shrub species: ______________________

Ground cover: ______________________

Orchard (type), Forest plantation (type), Crop (type): ______________________

____

---

[10] Clifford E. Knapp, *Just Beyond the Classroom: Community Adventures for Interdisciplinary Learning,* (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1996) p. 83-86. This guide to place-based project learning is available through ERIC/CRESS at AEL, Inc., P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

Terrain: ______________________________
Benchmarks: ______________________________
Elevation(s): ______________________________
Location(s): ______________________________
Maximum and minimum elevations: ______________________________
Landforms (flood plain, valley, dune, ravine, sink hole, ridge, rolling hills, other): ______________________________
____
Geology: ______________________________
____
Rock and mineral types: ______________________________
Features (rock outcrops, fossils, folding, glacial evidence, ripple marks, faults, bedding planes, gravel pits, other): ______________________________
Soil type(s) and pH ranges: ______________________________
Erosion (describe types): ______________________________
Soil Profile(s) (attach a sketch): ______________________________
Animal evidence: ______________________________
Homes: ______________________________
Tracks: ______________________________
Pathways: ______________________________
Food remains (droppings, pellets, skeletons, other): ______________________________
____
Plant damage: ______________________________
Plants: ______________________________
Poisonous: ______________________________
Edible: ______________________________
Medicinal: ______________________________
Arts/Crafts: ______________________________
Wildlife food source: ______________________________
Decorative: ______________________________
Built environment: ______________________________
Buildings (school, house, apartment, barn, shed, factory, garage, store, other): ______________________________
____
Utilities (power lines, telephone lines, water lines, hydrants, sewage lines, septic lines and tank, gas lines and tank, other) ______________________________
____
Transportation (road, trail, bridge, railroad, other): ______________________________
____
Scenic areas: ______________________________
____
Historical markers: ______________________________
Structures: ______________________________
Construction materials (wood, concrete block, brick, metal, natural stone, other): ______________________________
____
Exterior covering (paint, tile, stucco, shingle, aluminum siding, other): ______________________________
____
Size: ______________________________
Estimated age: ______________________________
Accessories (drain pipes, gutters, air conditioners, lighting, lightning rods, weather vanes, fire escapes, shutters, meters [gas, water, electricity], cornerstones, windows, doors, awnings, vents, chimneys, other): ______________________________
Evidence of weathering: ______________________________
Ground surface (concrete, asphalt, gravel, soil, lawn, other): ______________________________
____
Use of space: ______________________________
Parking areas (%): ______________________________
Play areas (%): ______________________________

Other:
Recreational equipment:
Problem areas:
Safety hazards:
Vandal damage:
Litter:
Area to be improved:
Other:
Miscellaneous (fire damage, incinerator, historical artifacts, posts, bearing trees, other):

Choice in how students will explore their locale, or what they focus on is an important ingredient in place-based education. It allows students to assume ownership of their work as it offers them opportunities to personalize their learning and their contributions to knowledge of their place. The following outline of a project which engages students in exploring a local cemetery gives an idea of the multitude of activities and directions such a project can take. This kind of approach to curriculum development provides sufficient structure for teachers to feel confident that the learning which takes place will be of consequence and yet is open enough to choice for students to direct their own activities.

Reading the Cemetery Story[11]

Organizing Problem

How is exploring a cemetery like reading a book?

Background

Almost every community has at least one cemetery. They are places to respect and enter with reverence and only with permission. Cemeteries are also places that can be "read" like a book if we know what to look for and how to interpret the symbols. Reading the words, dates and other engravings on the grave markers is only the beginning. We can also interpret the stones, plants, fences, buildings, and other features. The cemetery "story" deals with more than local history. Students can learn science, language arts, art, math, and other subjects in this adventure.

Possible Outcomes

1. Students will learn how to interpret the story of the cemetery through applying skills such as observing, thinking, questioning, inferring, and predicting.

2. Students will gain respect and appreciation for the value of cemeteries and will learn to care for and protect them.

3. Students will deal with the concept of death and dying investigating some of the lives of those buried there.

Possible Activities

1. Find out who owns and operates the cemetery and gain permission to investigate it. Make sure your purposes are clear before you begin.

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[11] Clifford E. Knapp, *Just Beyond the Classroom*, p. 60-63.

2. While at the cemetery, develop a written code of behavior that reflects respect for the people buried there, their families, and the site's environment.

3. Make a survey of the grave markers to determine the family names and their ancestors' places of origin. (Be aware of any students' relatives who are buried there.) Make inferences about the religion of the people. Investigate first names to determine if any patterns exist throughout the years.

4. Calculate the mean, median, and mode of the life spans of the people buried there. If the cemetery is old enough, draw generalizations about life spans in the 19th century compared to life spans in the 20th century, and compare life spans of men, women, and children.

5. Calculate the average plot size and determine the capacity of the cemetery to accommodate additional burials.

6. Talk to the people responsible for digging the graves, and ask them to tell stories about their experiences.

7. Study the effects of weathering on different types of grave markers, and predict which ones will last the longest.

8. Find evidence of cemetery vandalism, and develop a plan for repairing the damage or preventing future damage.

9. While sitting separated from others at the cemetery, write stories inspired by the setting. Think about why cemeteries are often the setting for scary horror stories.

10. Study the types and shapes of the grave markers and relate them to changes over time.

11. Find evidence of, or make inferences about, the causes of the death of people buried there, and then make generalizations about associated changes in medical science.

12. Survey the kinds of plants growing in the cemetery to determine if they were planted or grew wild.

13. Observe how families care for the graves and remember the deceased.

14. Determine if family sizes were larger or smaller at different times in history by surveying the markers.

Reflection Questions

1. What images of cemeteries have been communicated in the media? Which media form influenced you most? How can this prior conditioning affect this adventure?

2. Does talking about death and being where death is evident present a problem for some? What can be done about this?

3. What are the benefits and problems associated with investigating a cemetery and facing the issue of death?

4. Is it possible to separate feelings about death from thoughts about death? How do feelings affect thinking? How does thinking affect feelings?

5. What kinds of cemetery readings are easy? What kinds are difficult? Why is this so?

6. Has the cemetery adventure resulted in any changes in attitudes?...concepts?...skills?

7. How could the students help others feel more accepting about investigating a cemetery?...discussing death?

8. How have some of the world's religions helped people deal with death? What have schools done to help people deal with the issue of death?

Performance Assessments

1. Prepare an oral report or display to communicate to [a wider audience] what the class learned at the cemetery.

2. Write a story about being in the cemetery during the day and at night.

3. Through photographs, videos, or original illustrations, create a display about how to "read" the cemetery story.

4. Visit another cemetery and "read" its story. Analyze how your thinking skills improved.

While suggesting possible directions for student inquiry and outlining some of the necessary skills and understandings needed to carry out various projects, this suggestion for exploring a cemetery also provides various avenues students might wish to pursue. The ability of students to choose tends to result in a higher level of investment in and the assumption of greater responsibility for the learning. Many Rural Trust educators have recognized this as one of the benefits of undertaking place-based work.

Cemetery Studies

The Tombstone Project (Frederick, South Dakota)

An example of a cemetery project from the Rural Trust was carried out in Frederick, South Dakota. The Tombstone Project, as students called it, was conducted by junior year students in relation to learning about databases in their computer class. The students went to Savo Cemetery, a local cemetery with many Finnish gravestones, to collect data. Each student was assigned a row of headstones and recorded data relating to names, dates of birth and death, inscriptions, Bible verses, military rank, names of children, and other legible information. Some of the tombstones were in Finnish and students relied on local residents for translations.

The students then compiled one large database from which they generated charts and graphs that showed the years in which people died, the average age of people at death at various historical times, and how many people from a particular family were buried in the cemetery. These data led students to research possible explanations for what had influenced death rates--plagues, disease, crop failures, wars and changes in life expectancies over time.

The inquiry resulted in students gaining a better understanding of what it means to live in this place they call home. They learned about their community's original settlers and more about their own families through this project. For example, one student discovered that his family's name had been changed by a forebearer. Importantly, the database and analyses provide a permanent record for the community of Savo Cemetery. Students plan to provide similar documentation for other cemeteries in the area.

Rocky Gap Graveyard Inventory (Rocky Gap, Virginia)

Rocky Gap High School, located in the Appalachian mountains of southwestern Virginia has developed a multifaceted place-based curriculum around local history.[12] A part of this history and technology work involves the creation of an extensive database of local cemeteries in the area. The graveyard inventory database files list all relevant data for each graveyard including descriptions and diagrams of each grave as well as graphic aerial views of the graveyards. The databases, which have been created by junior students in John Dodson's local history and technology class over the past eight years, are stored digitally in the Bland County Archives.

So far, the history and technology classes have compiled over 70 cemetery catalogues. They are stored as searchable databases along with other databases that catalogue transcripts and photos. Many of the graveyards in Bland County are family plots that have been maintained for generations. Students describe where to find the cemeteries as well as all the pertinent details. A sample of this work follows:

Munsey Cemetery
Bland, Virginia

This graveyard is located on the Munsey farm in Bland, Virginia. It is on the right hand side of the road going down Crackersneck's Hollow from the Thompson's. It sits on a beautiful little hill overlooking the scenic surroundings.

It is surrounded by a 6 level wire fence to keep livestock away. It looks to be well maintained. All the graves face East except for the quadruple grave. It slopes gently from the gate corner to the opposite corner with a more steeping decline.

Groundhog activity has caused the collapse of one grave and they [the groundhogs] are working on more.

Grave No. 1
Name: Cecil W. Munsey
Inscription: Brother
Born: May 14, 1905
Died: January 29, 1944
Description of Headstone: Approximately 2 ft. tall with a point leading to back edge

Grave No. 2
Name: Schuler Bruce Kitts
Inscription: Virginia PVT 16 Infantry I Division WWI
Born: March 30,1894
Died: March 25, 1940
Description of Headstone: Approximately 2 ft. tall rounded to a point on the top

Grave No. 3
Name: William Harry Munsey
Born: December 5, 1928
Died: June 19, 1929
Description of Headstone: Approximately 2 ft. tall with a point leading to back edge

Grave No. 4
Name: Margaret Louise Munsey
Born: February 25, 1925

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[12] The overall Bland County Archives Project at Rocky Gap High School will be described in detail at a later point in this report.

Died: February 25, 1925
Description of Headstone: Approximately 2 ft. tall with a point leading to back edge

Grave No. 5
Name: Emily F. Munsey
Born: Not Listed
Died: Not Listed
Description of Headstone: Approximately 2 ft. tall with a point leading to back edge

Grave No. 6
Name: James H. Munsey
Born: January 15,1830
Died: March 6, 1908
Description of Headstone: Approximately 2 ft. tall with a point leading to back edge. Has a very intricate church carved on the front of the Headstone.

Grave No. 7
Name: Margaret L. Munsey
Inscription: Mother
Born. January 22, 1842
Died: Nov 18, 1917
Description of Headstone: Approximately 3 ft. tall with an obelisk on a square stand. It has broken away from the stand and is resting on the ground against it.

Each of the above descriptions are accompanied by a simple diagram of either a side or front view of the headstones. The report also includes a graphic display of the layout of the cemetery, including slopes and groundhog holes.

The inventory that is being compiled by students can be accessed and investigated for questions concerning birth, death and family patterns in the county. The possibilities for ongoing learning are endless and the service to the community is large.

Interdisciplinary Studies

Family Heritage Project (Wartburg Central High School, Tennessee)

The Family Heritage Project, designed by Judy Cross, a computer teacher, and Regina Headden, a U.S. History teacher, engaged high school students in studying their own family histories and relating them to events and periods of U.S. History.[13] During this study, students learned computer and research skills as well as a connected, deeper understanding of U.S. History and how their own lives and heritage are intertwined with and connected to this history. The work required data gathering, organizing information and communication through written and oral presentations aided by technology.

This powerful study began because Judy Cross wanted her students to learn to use computer software in ways that were meaningful to them; she felt strongly that their data not consist merely of templates or sample exercises. With grant support, she purchased genealogy software for her students. She introduced the project with the following instructions:

> The family heritage project is a true story about YOU and your family! It may make you laugh, it may make you cry. It may help you discover things you never knew, and it may help you to

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[13] These two teachers had earlier attended a Foxfire workshop and learned about designing projects using family histories and local resources. Driving back from the workshop, they started planning this family heritage unit. We cite this to suggest how much Rural Trust teachers have been inspired by the work and ideas of others and from this exposure have grown their own units around place.

> remember things you never want to forget. Above all, it is a story that never ends and gets more precious as time goes by!
>
> By investigating and recording events from your past and present, you will be helping to preserve your family's heritage. Your heritage should mean a lot to you and your family. Not everyone is related to the rich and famous, but your ancestors played an important role in defining what America is today.
>
> The objective of this project is to help you use your computer skills and creativity to format and produce a quality record of your family in print and as a website. You will have a Pentium computer, laser and color printers, digital camera, scanner, and Internet available for you to use in compiling your project. Hopefully, as you work on the various components of this project, you will develop an interest in your family and will enjoy not only recording the past but realize that you are "making memories" daily.
>
> You will provide two hard copies of each item submitted for your project. When the project is completed, one copy will be placed in a notebook for you to take home and share with your family. The second copy will be bound and placed in the Central High School Genealogy and Historical Archives. Your family web site will be available on the CHS Genealogy Web Server. A CD-ROM will be prepared for you to keep which consists of all of the word processing, presentation, graphics and HTML files you create.

Regina Headden framed the purposes of the complementary history work by informing students of the outcomes she expected. She answered the question, "Why research family history?" with the following points:

- to gain a better understanding of oneself;
- to be able to place family events with historical events so that history has more meaning;
- to contribute to the written record of your family; and
- to learn how history is gathered, interpreted, and written.

Headden established the tasks for her students as follows:

> George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin are three men synonymous with the founding of the United States of America. Although these men played a significant role in America's heritage, all families who came to America, lived in America, and worked in America played a role in making America what it is today.
>
> The objective of this project is to help you understand how your family has ties to local, state, and national history. Your heritage should mean a lot to you and your family. Your ancestors played an important role in defining what America is today. Hopefully, you will develop an interest in your family and will get to know older members of your family better.
>
> Your project will consist of the items listed below. You will provide two copies of each item submitted for your project. One copy will be placed in sheet protectors and in the binder provided. The other copy will be placed in a folder until the project is completed. When completed, the second copy will be bound and retained for the Central High School Genealogy and Historical Archives.

PROJECT ITEMS AND DUE DATES ARE:

DUE DATE	**PROJECT ITEM**
February 5	**A title page:** Use your creativity to make a title page that includes the following information: (1) the family name being researched; (2) your name; (3) semester and year project was completed. **A pedigree chart:** Completed using a genealogy software. It must include the following: 1. Your name and vital information 2. Your parents' names and vital information 3. Your grandparents' names and vital information At least one great grandparent with vital information
February 11	**A 200-500 word essay** on the history of your family including details on how your family came to America and Morgan County. **A personal timeline** - see description of example in this hand-out. **A family timeline** - see description and example in this hand-out.
February 19	**A two-page autobiography:** An autobiography is your life story. Tell where you were born. Give names of parents, grandparents, siblings, etc. Talk about where and how you grew up. Related stories of events in your life--starting school; your first year of high school; accidents, illnesses, surgeries, getting braces or a driver's license, etc.
March 12	**At least three interesting family stories** that are: (1) told in your own words; (2) typed on separate pages; (3) at least _ page in length. **A description of at least two traditions** observed by your family. These should be (1) told in your own words; (2) typed on separate pages; (3) at least _ page in length. **A list of the places you and your family have lived.** Be sure to give specific addresses when available. Pictures would be nice as well – they are optional.
March 26	**A list of family members who have served in the military.** This list should include: (1) veteran's name; (2) branch of service; (3) wars/battles fought; (4) medals earned - if any; (5) photo - if available.
April 9	**A pictorial history of your family members – living and dead.** Photos should: • Be photocopied. • Have people identified. • Include immediate family – grandparents, parents, siblings, self.
April 16	**An interview with an older living relative.** This person should be at least 60 years old. Questions for interview can be obtained from the classroom resources. **Photocopies of pictures with descriptions of family mementos or heirlooms.** Examples of heirlooms/mementos: quilts, fans, antiques, paintings, jewelry, China, glassware, letters, certificates, diaries, etc. If your family has no heirlooms, then create a list of possessions you or your parents have that could be passed along to future generations - examples: class rings, wedding/engagement rings; etc. **A copy of a favorite family recipe** that has been used by at least two generations. The recipe should: Not have Cool Whip as an ingredient; Have a name for the item being made. Have the name of the person who supplied the recipe. Have a list of all ingredients. Have specific instructions for preparing the item. **A list of cemeteries** where family members are buried and a picture of yourself standing beside a grave that is important to you. The list of cemeteries should include: • Name of cemetery

	City, County, State where located **A family group sheet** on you, your parents, your grandparents, and one set of great-grandparents.
April 30	**A class presentation** that includes the following: A PowerPoint or Corel Presentation or a webpage. A 15-minute talk about your project in front of the class.

Headden suggested that students might look for information in the form of documents and artifacts in libraries, the courthouse, church records, at home in attics, cellars, closets, trunks, boxes, desk drawers, jewelry boxes, and picture frames. She suggested such documents as the following:

- **Printed Histories**
  - U.S. histories
  - State histories
  - County and city histories
  - Church histories
  - Family histories
- **Newspapers, newsletters from corporations, churches, civic organizations**
- **Vital Records:** Birth, marriage, and death certificates
- **Legal Documents:** Divorce decrees, tax records, contracts, licenses, mortgage certificates, wills, passports, law suits.
- **Maps**
- **Federal Census Records**
- **Military/Selective Service Records**
- **Letters: From whom? When? Why kept?**
- **Diaries: scrapbooks**

Headden also encouraged students to formulate questions to use in interviews with older members of the family/community as they sought to uncover stories and other important family information.

Along with the task description, Headden provided specific guidelines for constructing a timeline as follows:

Timelines

Events in 20th Century America have shaped our lives more than we would like to admit. We are part of our local, state, national, and international history. People cannot help but be affected by the historical events in their lives. Making a timeline will help you put your life in historical perspective.

Instructions:

- Create a table with three columns. The columns should be labeled **My Life, Date, World Events.**
- In the column labeled **My Life**, list milestones in your life. For example, list the years when you learned to talk, learned to walk, started school, got braces, went out for a team, started high school, had surgery, got your license, etc.
- The **Date** column is obvious - write the year in which the events in your life occurred.
- In the **World Events** column, write an event that occurred the same year. The event can relate to anything that occurred around the world from a team winning a championship to a famous court case.
- ○ The family timeline should be completed in the same manner, except the first column should be labeled **Family Events**. The family timeline can begin with your parents, your grandparents, or any previous generation.

A sample of student work that illustrates how the timelines were constructed shows a page from a Personal Timeline and one from the Family Timeline.

Personal Timeline		
My Life	**Year**	**World Event**
I was born	1983	Final episode of M*A*S*H aired to 125 million viewers
Hospitalized for respiratory problems and pneumonia	1983	Martin Luther King, Jr. day was designated for observance on the third Monday of January
Started walking	1984	Donald Duck celebrated his 50th birthday
Started pre-school	1986	First surrogate birth of a test tube baby was announced
Started elementary school	1988	Largest cocaine seizure in US history made by officials in Tarpon Springs, FL (9,200 lbs.)
Was in my Aunt Margie's wedding	1988	George Bush was elected as President of the United States
Was in my Aunt Peggy's wedding	1988	McDonald's prepared to open 20 stores in Moscow
Started Girl Scouts	1988	NBA championship was won by the Los Angeles Lakers
Got braces	1990	In South Africa, Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years in prison
Started playing basketball	1990	Saddam Hussein sends tanks into Kuwait
Family vacation to the Grand Canyon, Utah, Arizona	1990	Noriega surrenders to U.S. authorities and is imprisoned in Florida
Family vacation to the Rockies, Wyoming, Mt. Rushmore, and Colorado	1991	Rodney King is beaten by police…on video
Started 4-H	1992	Johnny Carson leaves "The Tonight Show"
Family Vacation to Montana and Canada	1992	William Jefferson Clinton is elected President with 43% of the vote

Family Timeline*		
Family Member	**Year**	**World Event**
Great-great-great-grandpa born	1815	War against Algeria was declared by Congress
Great-great-great-grandma _____ moved to the United States from Germany	1840	The U.S. Census recorded a population of 17,069,453
Great-great-grandpa _____ born	1858	Minnesota was admitted as the 32nd state to join the Union
Great-grandpa _____ born	1864	Abraham Lincoln was re-elected President of the United States
Great-great-grandpa born	1866	A cholera epidemic decimated many U.S. cities
Great-grandma born	1870	The Fifteenth Amendment was adopted
Great-great-grandma _____ born in Germany	1873	The first penny postcards in the U.S. were issued
Great-grandpa _____ born	1881	Home of William Kissam Vanderbilt, at the corner of Fifth Ave. and 52nd St., was completed at a cost of $3,000,000
Grandfather _____ born	1884	Grover Cleveland was elected President of the United States

*Family names have been removed.

The students' selections of events in their timelines invited interesting questions about how they determined "important" world events. It also helped them make personal connections to notable historical events.

Because most students had no previous exposure to rubrics, Cross and Headden spent time "teaching" the students how to use the rubric they had created to evaluate the project.[14] A portion of their original rubric for the project follows:

EVALUATION RUBRIC OF U.S. HISTORY FAMILY HERITAGE PROJECT

Item	1	2	3	4	Total
Title page	Title page is plain and meets most criteria.	Title page is plain and meets all criteria.	Title page has border and all criteria.	Title page has all criteria and is unique.	
Pedigree Chart	Chart is hand-written on a form.	Chart created by software but contains only names.	Chart created by software and contains names and other vital information.	Chart created by software; contains names and vital information and goes beyond 4 generations.	
Family Essay	Essay is less than 200 words and does not give any historical information.	Essay is less than 200 words but gives historical information on the family.	Essay is more than 200 words and gives some information on the family history.	Essay is more than 200 words and gives historical facts on the family history.	
Personal Timeline	Timeline contains less than five entries.	Timeline contains less than 10 entries.	Timeline contains at least 10 entries.	Timeline contains more than 10 entries.	
Family Timeline	Timeline contains less than five entries.	Timeline contains less than 10 entries.	Timeline contains at least 10 entries.	Timeline contains more than 10 entries.	
Autobiography	Autobiography is less than one page.	Autobiography is less than two pages.	Autobiography is two pages.	Autobiography is two or more pages.	
Interview with Parent	Transcript is less than one page with closed-ended questions.	Transcript is less than one page with closed-ended questions and was taped.	Transcript is at least one page with open-ended questions.	Transcript is more than one page with open-ended questions and was taped.	

Students were asked to evaluate their work throughout the project. The first time Cross asked them to complete a self-evaluation form, almost all of the students assigned themselves 100% for the week. As they became more engaged with the work and more familiar with the expectations outlined in the rubric, they became more thoughtful about the process, their self-evaluations matching more fully teacher evaluations. This is a usual pattern in Rural Trust schools engaged in place-based projects. As teachers become less prominent as providers of information, students assume greater ownership for the direction of the work. Quality then becomes a concern of the students, who care about doing a good job because it is their work and may be publicly presented, understood to be valuable to the community.

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[14] We provide several examples of rubrics and rubric development in the *Assessment Monograph*, A *Special Report to the Rural School and Community Trust* (October 1999), prepared by the Rural Trust Research and Evaluation Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Typically, as teachers gain experience in developing rubrics, they tend to provide more and more content as well as examples of quality work, exemplars.

Cross told us that, in general, there was little student commitment to high quality work in her more traditionally taught classes. Getting students to do high quality work "was like pulling teeth." But the genealogy project was a turnaround. In her view, quality improved 100%--not only with what the students completed (the products) but how it was completed (the process). At the beginning of this project, she heard typical excuses – that if students only had more time they would have done this or that, something more, better. When she gave them opportunities to revisit and refine the work, they became more reflective about the process, more aware of their work, more critical of its quality, and as a result, the work improved greatly.

Headden, too, experienced an enormous shift in her students' efforts on this project. Typically, fewer than 75% of the students participated or seemed engaged in their work and 10% would fail rather than do the required research paper. The genealogy project, however, perhaps because of its relevance to their lives, generated much more enthusiasm--only three students out of 250 did not complete the project. Students were producing something of value to themselves and to others as evidenced by the fact that many of the projects were given as Mother's Day gifts while others were featured at special family get-togethers. In some cases, the learning was extremely personal and moving. A father of one of Headden's students engaged her in a lengthy conversation in which he said that the family heritage project in which he also got deeply involved, was the toughest project he and his son had ever had to do. Though the unit has come to an end, he recounted that the historical work would not end for his family. Because of this work, he had found his father's sister, with whom there had been no connection for 30 years, and she was coming to visit them. As a result of the "school" work, his family connections and dynamics had been altered forever. Another student's work was featured at her family's summer reunion. Both Cross and Headden felt that this project was, by far, the most fruitful work of the year and, by incorporating student feedback, they expect to make the Family History project even richer in subsequent years.

Enthusiasm for this work carried over into the community. The newspaper carried a story of the project and family members followed the progress of the work as students compiled their family histories. An 87-year-old unofficial county historian who has a treasure trove of collected documents and knowledge of the area contacted Headden and the Rural Trust Project Director, Ed Diden, to offer a loan of material to the school. She also offered to take subsequent classes on tours of the county. With greater involvement and more communication between the community and the school, community members became aware of the place-based work and saw the products on display at the Academic Banquet sponsored by local business leaders and parents. Cross indicated that "parents are 100% behind us." This is reassuring to teachers who feel the pressure of state standards that prescribe the content of student learning and rarely include local knowledge.[15]

Teachers beginning place-based work often need to free themselves from external constraints and habits of traditional classroom teaching in order to teach in a very different way, that leads to taking student learning outside of the school building and into the community. Cross and Headden, as noted earlier, received considerable encouragement from their Foxfire experience. Foxfire, with its instructional approaches, guided by the Foxfire Core Principles, has been helpful to many Rural Trust teachers. Several of these Foxfire principles are particularly important to place-based work of all types.

- All work must flow from student desire and concerns.
- The work is characterized by student action.
- The work emphasizes peer teaching and teamwork.
- The work must be clearly connected to the real world outside the classroom.

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[15] Minnesota and Alaska represent exceptions. Rural Trust educators there have raised consciousness at the state level about the importance of place-based work for the sustainability of rural life and livelihoods so that place-based curricula is incorporated into the state standards.

- Students must take the time to reflect upon experiences.[16]

Cross believes that relinquishing some control--which is required of student-directed, open-ended, authentic work--was difficult, especially because students have typically had little experience with long-term learning tasks in which they must shoulder considerable responsibility. At first, the students who typically got As and Bs were frustrated when she handed them the guidelines for the project and let them loose. Once they grasped that she wasn't intending to play a trick on them and shared the rubrics that described the expectations for quality work, the reaction of the students began to change. They did the best work they had ever done in her classes. Both Headden and Cross have seen how powerful learning can be when students take more responsibility for directing it and it flows from their interests and concerns. They, along with students and the community, are eager to extend their project-based work.

The Stream Project at Noble High School (Berwick, Maine)

Place-based curricula can occur in all subject areas. In rural areas the importance of the natural environment is essential to establishing an ecology of place focus. Thus, we see many projects across the country that serve communities by monitoring natural resources that are vital to the community. The following example of a science curriculum grounded in place, took place in Liza Finkel's 9th grade science class. Students engaged in field studies at a local stream and learned a great deal about water in the environment, the state of local water resources, ways of protecting water quality, and how to advocate for their community's well-being by becoming stewards of their local environment. The case study that follows demonstrates how place-based work can be embedded in deep learning about scientific principles and environmental consequences of human activities as students learn from their local context. Linking well-planned project work with appropriate assessments that ask students to reflect on their learning as well as demonstrate their understanding is another hallmark of the work Liza Finkel conducts at Noble High School in rural Maine.

Teachers at Noble have been at this kind of active learning for several years now and their experience illustrates how place-based, collaborative, real-work activities have created a challenging and deep educational experience for the approximately 1,000 high school students from three adjacent towns that make up the school population. The communities that the school serves are generally poor. Small industrial plants--a stadium seating factory, a tannery, an electronics factory and another that makes jet engine parts--join small businesses like lawn care and hair care to provide employment in the towns. Some of the residents are seasonal workers in the tourist industry as Maine's southern coast is only about 10 miles away. Despite a tradition that did not value education much since it served little purpose on the factory floors, Noble High School graduates now pursue higher education more than did past generations. Currently, about 55% of the graduating class enters four-year colleges, another 10% attends two-year institutions and about 8% joins the military.

The Rural Trust work at Noble fits seamlessly into ongoing restructuring that began with membership in the Coalition of Essential Schools about 10 years ago. The organization of the school reflects its implementation of many of the Coalition's Essentials. All students, for example, take a rigorous academic program which includes four years of major subjects with all students taking advanced subjects such as physics and math. Classes are heterogeneously grouped and the 9th and 10th grade are organized into teams allowing for interdisciplinary project planning and collaborative assignments.

The 9th grade science curriculum is entirely project-based. Students work through six large projects that are comprised of a number of individual and group tasks and products. Each project is outlined for students at the beginning, providing them with the Essential Questions that will guide their inquiry into the subject, a list of Goals or intended outcomes, and how the project meets state mandated Learning Results, Maine's term for Standards. The first project of the year is the Stream Project which pursues answers to these Essential Questions:

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[16] Eliot Wigginton, *Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience.* (Garden City: NJ, Doubleday, 1985).

1. How do people study, explain, and represent the world using scientific tools?
2. What can a stream tell us about the quality of our local environment?
3. How can I make a difference?

The project examines the role of water in our lives and in the natural world. Students use the natural laboratory of the local Worster Brook to carry out a series of assignments which include the following:

Major Assignments for the Stream Project

- Water Cycle Diagram
  In this assignment you will develop a more complex view of the water cycle than the one you may already have. Through participation in a simulation game, you will travel as a water molecule might through the water cycle. You will then be asked to represent your understanding of this more complex water cycle with a detailed diagram or written explanation as well as reflect on what was new about the content of this exercise and what was review.

- Groundwater Exploration
  In this assignment you will explore in more detail the part of the water cycle during which water is underground. As a class, we will investigate what happens to water as it passes through groundwater systems and use that knowledge to design and evaluate water purification systems.

- Visual Survey and Habitat Inventory of Worster Brook
  In this assignment you will work with a partner to begin to describe Worster Brook and the environment that surrounds it. Using a checklist designed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), you will gather data on the physical characteristics of Worster Brook, and will prepare a written report on your findings. Your report will end with a list of questions you and your partner are interested in investigating further.

- Stream Guide Contribution
  In this assignment you will work with a group of students to collect and identify plants, macro invertebrates, and other organisms from the stream and associated riparian zone. As a class, we will calculate the Pollution Tolerance Index for the stream to get a measure of stream water quality. You will then create a "Stream Guide page" to describe one organism's habitat, niche, life cycle, and pollution tolerance.

- Chemical Analysis of Water in Worster Brook
  In this assignment, you will collect and analyze samples of water collected at the brook. You will learn how to systematically collect water samples, and how to conduct chemical tests to determine the amount of nitrates, phosphates, and dissolved oxygen present in brock water samples. You will also test for the presence of fecal coliform and determine the pH of the water. You will also learn how to interpret your results and to determine what your tests tell us about the quality of the water in Worster Brook.

- Freshwater Ecosystem Concept Map or Diagram
  In this assignment you will be asked to make a concept map or labeled diagram illustrating the ways in which all of the concepts we have been studying are linked to one another. This diagram should also show the ways in which we have seen examples of these concepts in our study of the stream ecosystem.

- Design, Write-up, and Presentation of Stream Investigation
  In this assignment you will design and conduct an investigation into at least one aspect of the stream that you are interested in learning more about. Your investigation should demonstrate what you have already learned about the stream through our work as a class. You will share the results of your investigation with the rest of the class at a "Share Fair" in which you will display your findings and summarize your results in writing and out loud.

- Community Contribution
  In this assignment, we, as a class, will decide how we can best communicate what we have learned about Worster Brook to the community.

- Stream Project Portfolio
  For this assignment you will gather all of the work you have completed for the Stream Project and organize it into a portfolio. Keeping copies of your work in a folder as you go along will make this assignment very easy! In addition to compiling the work you have already completed, you will create a Table of Contents, an Introduction and a Conclusion.

These major assignments, which are worked on over the first eight weeks of school, are composed of a variety of instructional activities that thoroughly familiarize students with all aspects of water. "In fact," Liza remarked, "we go into it so thoroughly that students tell me I ruin water for them." They spend 80 minutes collecting macroinvertebrates, indicators of water quality, and then 80 minutes the next day categorizing them. All in all, students visit the Worster Brook at least four times over the course of the project--once to conduct a visual survey, once to collect macroinvertebrates, once to collect water samples for chemical analysis, and at least once to carry out the scientific investigations they have designed on their own in groups. They use EPA materials for visual and site habitat monitoring. Students calculate how much water they use over the weekend and they read local newspaper articles about the state of their local water conditions. They learn to conduct chemical analyses and each student becomes an expert in a particular test. Ultimately, groups are compiled of appropriate experts to work on a particular scenario of water pollution. Based on their scenario, they predict what test results they would expect and what the community should do to fix the situation.

The assessment of the work is ongoing as Liza consults with groups of students as they work on their assignments but it is regulated by a detailed rubric which outlines not only what is required for each major assignment but describes levels of quality performances. Noble High School uses a five level scale for most of its rubrics--Distinguished, Advanced, Proficient, Novice and No Credit--which corresponds to the five letter grades A-F. Liza only describes what goes into the Distinguished, Advanced, and Proficient categories because she requires all of her students to aim for at least a proficient performance. Assignments in Liza's class are always available to revise or to add to as students understand better what is needed to produce a high quality product. Liza also relies on last year's assignments as models for this year's students. She says that seeing what students have done in the past is often more meaningful than reading directions, and students strive to improve the quality of assignments from the previous year. It becomes a challenge.

One of Liza's assignments during the Stream Project engages the students in real work--designing a water purification system. The design of the facility is rated by the entire class for efficiency based on timed trials performed in class and a comparison of water samples from the various designs. The task description for this assignment indicates the roles that students assume as they complete and assess the work.

Help Wanted: Water Treatment Facility Designer

> Noble High School needs to build its own water treatment plant in order to meet the needs of its growing student body. Each group in this class is being given a chance to submit a design proposal for the new facility. Each group will have equal opportunity to come up with a design using the materials provided by the facilities planning committee. The facilities planning committee will then review each proposal and evaluate how well it has met the following criteria:
>
> - The facility must work as quickly as possible.
> - The facility must be as effective as possible.
> - The facility must be as inexpensive as possible.
>
> The easiest way to convince the committee that your group has come up with a good design is by keeping good records of your materials, procedure, and results for each trial. Fill out the "trial

records" provided on this sheet as you test each design. (You MUST fill these out!!) These records will support your claim that yours is in fact the best water filter design.

Trial #1
Materials used: ________
Procedure: ____________
Start Time: ___________
Stop Time: ___________
Time Lapse: __________
How effective was this filter? (Very, Moderately, Not At All) ________________________

Each project that Finkel pursues concludes with a portfolio of the assessment pieces of the assignment, a table of contents, an introduction and a conclusion. The latter are reflective pieces on students' learning over the course of the project. Reading the introductory and concluding pieces of each project's portfolio, it is possible to discern what her students have learned. Liza notes:

> [The portfolio] informs my teaching a lot by asking an open-ended question about what [students] think was the most important thing they learned in the unit. It's much more informative than any unit test I could give them. And they need to learn how to talk about their work. It is hard, though, because some kids don't like to write very much. The introduction and conclusion pieces are big for them, though only five out of 80 kids didn't turn one in in the latest project.

The following example of a project portfolio guide is related to the Stream Project.

Stream Project Portfolio Guide

What is a Project Portfolio? A project portfolio is a collection of the work you have done on this project. You MUST include certain pieces of work (see list below) and you can CHOOSE to include others (see suggestions below). This portfolio should demonstrate what you have learned through doing the project and should also allow you to show off your best work.

What MUST be included in your portfolio:

- A Table of Contents page
- An Introduction in which you introduce the project as a whole, summarizing or listing the essential questions, and briefly describing the purpose of the project
- Water Cycle Diagram
- Stream Guide Contribution
- Design and Write-up of Stream Investigation
- What do you know about water quality? assignment
- At least one homework assignment (of your choice)
- A Conclusion in which you:
    (1) Summarize our findings about the water quality of Worster Brook, including information from the Visual Survey and Habitat Inventory, Macroinvertebrate Study, and Chemical Tests.
    (2) Explain how the work in your portfolio demonstrates what you have learned through this project (refer to the ME Learning Results on the initial handout for this).
    (3) Answer the following questions:
        (a) What is the piece of work that makes you the proudest in this portfolio? What about it makes you feel that way?
        (b) What is the piece of work you wish you had done a better job completing? What would you do to improve it if you had a chance to revise it further?

What else MIGHT you CHOOSE to include?
Copies of other assignments you have completed for this project
Copies of related journal entries

Work that you have done on your own, or for another class, related to this topic

As a way of including students, assuring that they will be knowledgeable about the portfolio process, Liza and her students designed a rubric tailored to the Stream Project.

Rubric for Stream Project Portfolio

A Proficient Portfolio

- Contains all required assignments
- All assignments are complete and revised to at least the Proficient level
- Includes a legible Table of Contents
- Includes a clear and complete Introduction
- Includes a clear and complete Conclusion
- All pieces (including Table of Contents, Introduction, and Conclusion) are either typed or legible
- Is neatly organized (at a minimum, assignments are placed in the portfolio in the order listed on the Table of Contents)

An Advanced Portfolio

- Meets all of the requirements for a Proficient Portfolio
- All assignments have been revised or corrected to the Advanced level
- Includes at least one optional assignment
- The Introduction and Conclusion are detailed and show evidence of thought and effort beyond the minimum requirements
- Is presented neatly in a folder or binder

A Distinguished Portfolio

- Meets all of the requirements for an Advanced Portfolio
- Includes at least two optional assignments
- Most assignments have been revised to the Distinguished level, and any that are not Distinguished are revised to the Advanced level
- Demonstrates connections between the work of the project and related ideas or issues from other classes, or from outside of school (these connections may be included in the Introduction and Conclusion of the Portfolio, or may be included as extra assignments)
- Demonstrates the use of outside resources
- Is unique and distinctly the work of you as an individual

Because this is the initial exposure many of her students have had to a portfolio, work must first be done to help them learn to save and organize the various project assignments. Learning to be organized is one of the biggest challenges for her freshmen students as they compile their portfolios. Students' reactions to this task vary, according to Liza. "Sometimes they love it and sometimes they hate it. It is a huge organizational task--especially early on in the freshman year. They have to remember to save stuff." But she also notes that students become adept at the process during the year. She is able to hold up a portfolio later on in the semester and students will point out that there is no table of contents or no introduction. "They notice what is missing. They number pages now."

The final assessment in Liza's class is a portfolio that requires students to collect the project work they have done throughout the year and write a self-reflective introduction and conclusion. The task description for this portfolio illustrates the kinds of open-ended questions Liza asks throughout the year to encourage students to evaluate their own learning.

Science Final Experience

This final experience is designed to help you reflect on your past year in science. In order to do this, you will complete three activities. Your overall grade will be based on:

¥ The thoughtfulness of your participation DURING the final experience on EACH of the tasks
¥ The quality of your individual contributions today (written and oral)
¥ Your ability to demonstrate connections between activities or units from the past year and the activities you complete today
¥ Your ability to contribute and work with others in small and large groups today

Part One

Written Reflection (*on a separate piece of paper*)
In this part of your Final Experience, you will be asked to answer, in writing, the following reflection questions. You will be graded on the thoughtfulness of your answers, and on the quality of your answers. This means that you should write in complete sentences, be specific, include as many details as you can, and reflect carefully on what you have learned over the course of the semester and the year in each of your answers.

1) A. What would you tell a friend from another team, or from another school, about the effects our every day activities have on the earth's ecosystems, and what we should do about them?
B. How could you convince them of the seriousness of this issue?

2) A. What was the most useful, interesting or important thing you learned in science this year?
B. What made it that way?

3) A. What was the piece of work you completed this year in science that makes you the proudest?
B. Why does it make you feel that way?

4) Looking back over your freshman year in science, what would you do differently if you had the chance to do it all over again? Why?

5) What advice would you give next year's freshmen to help them be successful at Noble High School?

Part Two

Letter to a Future Teacher (*on a separate piece of paper*)
In this part of your Final Experience you will be asked to write a letter to a new teacher. Your letter should include your idea of what makes someone a good teacher, and advice to a new teacher that will help her or him be the kind of teacher who can help someone like YOU learn. This letter will be given to a real person, and I have given you their name below so that you can make it as personal as possible. Be sure to tell them something about you (your grade level, your interests, your name, etc.) as well as give them good advice that they can use as they begin teaching. You should proofread your letter and turn in a FINAL DRAFT (no spelling errors, no crossed out words, etc.). You should address your letter to: _____.

Part Three

A. Saving the World's Resources
In this task you will be asked to solve a problem as a whole class. You will be given a limited amount of time to decide on and then carry out your solution together. You will be graded

individually on your participation in this activity, and as a group on your ability to work together to solve the problem.

B. Reflection and Discussion

You will be asked to reflect, as a part of a class discussion, on the activity you have just completed. The following questions should guide the discussion:

1) What would you describe as the strengths of the LARGE group in solving this problem (what did you do that worked)?
2) What were your individual contributions to solving this problem?
3) What did you learn from solving this problem about the group, and about yourself?

The teachers at Noble, like most teachers across the country, have to contend with their state's required standardized tests. In general, the MEA (Maine Educational Assessment) scores at Noble have been good, going up in every area but math over the past six years. The greatest challenge students and teachers face is that the MEA is now a nine-day marathon test. As Liza notes, "Because our kids are used to adults treating them as adults, taking responsibility for their actions, becoming independent thinkers, sitting for nine days to take tests is not something they want to do." As a result, there is some worry that students will not perform well on these accountability measures. Also, the timing of the test does not correspond to the curricular path of students at Noble. As one example, the MEA tests for physics in the 11th grade but Noble students do not take physics until the 12th grade. Currently, the MEA is not a high stakes test--a requirement for promotion or graduation--and Noble teachers have been able to raise the level of student achievement on MEA in spite of, possibly because of, their project-based assignments, performance activities, and portfolio assessments that engage students in complex, meaningful work related to place, and which inform students of quality criteria for each assignment and engage them in self assessment throughout their high school years.

Kickapoo River Institute (Wisconsin)[17]

The river and its valley were catalysts for the integrated curriculum projects that took place in the Kickapoo River Institute. The themes that drove the work, which took place mostly outside the school building walls, were: Nature and Society; Biogeography of the Kickapoo Valley; Ecology, Economics and Energy; Technology, Tools and Thermodynamics; and Healthy People, Healthy Places.

The "teachers" of the institute were mostly in the community. Over sixty people contributed to instruction in the year the students spent 100 days in the community. A short sampling of these contributors follows:

- A soil conservationist and wildlife biologist spent over twenty hours and parts of several days at a wetlands restoration site with students.
- A prairie restorationist gave a school slide show and spent four hours on a hike of a Nature Conservancy site.
- An environmental geologist conducted half a dozen field workshops examining the sedimentary history of our area.
- A professor of history conducted two three-hour workshops on archival and primary source research.
- A forestry technician helped identify and map a tree trail.
- A professor of geography conducted a three hour workshop on G.I.S. and cultural mapping.
- A retired teacher helped students conduct Civil War research through the Internet.

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[17] The Kickapoo River Institute school operated during the 1996-97 year. Its influence, however, has been large. James Lewicki, the teacher-director of the school keeps his place-based work alive in the more conventional school setting he is now in and continues to work with Rural Trust educators on place-oriented practice. We include here some of the work of the Institute because it is so instructive.

- Many community members shared their life stories for oral histories and focused research.[18]

The curriculum of the Kickapoo River Institute was unique and individualized. While students attended the regular high school for upper level math and science classes, the work of the Institute was done without textbooks and was comprised of authentic field studies and original research conducted by students alongside community experts. James Lewicki facilitated the learning process for the students, but the specific content of learning was determined by the students themselves. An individual education plan was drawn up with each student, beginning with "gaps in learning" but also building on strengths. Lewicki found that as students assumed responsibility for designing their own learning paths, their motivation increased. Students kept a Learning Portfolio in which they regularly wrote answers to questions that asked them to reflect on their own learning about learning. Some of these questions were:

1. What worked well for you last year? Recall a lesson, day or experience that will give detail to this question.
2. What part of learning has been the strongest for you in the last three years?
3. Given your personal magic ward of change, what would you change in your reading class, math class, science class, etc.? (Remember the magic wand is for you to change something about you, not the teacher or the subject.) What is it about the way you learn about these subjects that you would wish to change?

Kelly, age 15, had this to say about her emerging understanding of learning:

Learning is caring and finding truth
In something that you can't see.
It's listening and watching, viewing and doing.
Why someone would not want to learn new things is wrong,
You learn them no matter what.
What you learn makes you who you are. And you never stop.
Learning is an eternal flame that catches everyone
In a bonfire of brilliance.
To learn is to live life.

In addition to their reflections on learning, students produced self-evaluations on how they were progressing on their individual learning plans and gave two-hour portfolio conferences twice a year in which they presented their progress, buttressed by samples of their work, to their parents and the larger community. The individual investment of the students in their work was high and their products reflected their investment. As Lewicki states, "If you put kids in the adult world for 100 days, they get good at being adults."

Community Inquiries

An Inquiry into Cash Flow at Howard High School (Howard, South Dakota)

Place has become more dominant in the curriculum of Howard High School as a result of the phenomenal impact of an inquiry into the spending patterns of local residents. Noticing that local businesses were closing, concern for the future of the community prompted Future Business Leaders of America students to design and conduct a community survey and analysis to determine whether and/or where taxable income was spent--in the town, county, or elsewhere. Not only did the results inform students and local citizens where their disposable income was being spent, it also raised concerns about the local economy. Students found that residents were regularly driving to Sioux Falls, an urban center miles away, to avail themselves of a greater number of choices and often the cheaper prices that the chain stores could offer. When store owners, businesses and community members were sensitized to the potential gains that would come from residents spending just 10% more in their county, changes were made by both sellers and consumers. The following description of the work comes from a report that was written and distributed by Howard High School's Future Business Leaders of America.

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[18] This list is reproduced from James Lewicki, *Linking Dreams: Teaching and Learning in Classrooms, Communities, and Field Studies* (Working draft).

> ### Purpose
>
> While witnessing small rural communities fade away with the loss of local business, the Howard Future Business Leaders of America decided to help its community of Miner County avoid this epidemic. Our 1995-1996 American Enterprise Project, a study of local community cash flow, was an attempt to educate our community about the advantages of local spending. By working with local business leaders, members increased their understanding of the American enterprise system....
>
> Because the United States has a free economy, we have the right to choose what we want to buy and where those purchases are made. Our economy also gives businesses the right to compete. If businesses are not competitive, customers often look elsewhere for products and services. Our project provided information to help local businesses remain competitive with the establishments of surrounding urban communities.
>
> Through surveys, members of the community were able to voice their opinions and make suggestions on how to increase disposable income spending within Miner County.
>
> Our project answered the question, "What kind of purchases are typically made within or outside of the community?" The final information allowed us to make recommendations to local establishments on how to improve their business.
>
> ### Research
>
> In the 1994-1995 school year, South Dakota State University (SDSU) held a meeting to discuss rural and community development. FBLA advisor Randy Parry, principal Jim Lentz and chapter members Jill Calmus and Jesse Kampshoff attended this meeting. The loss of rural communities to larger metropolitan areas was discussed. At this time, the Howard school district became committed to a community renewal effort.
>
> In a recent study at Iowa State University, citizens of one hundred small Iowa towns were surveyed. Results showed that only 51% of the respondents' daily-need shopping was done locally, and for all other services, the majority of the residents left town. Respondents also felt that the loss of small businesses was a severe loss. We believed these statistics applied to most rural communities, including ours.
>
> According to the Bureau of Statistics at the University of South Dakota, Miner County has decreased not only in the number of businesses in recent years but also in total sales. This is based on the sales tax revenue.
>
> After researching this common problem, our chapter decided we must do something to help our rural community. SDSU had developed a variety of grant renewal projects for small rural schools. After examining the projects they had designed, we chose the community cash flow project because it was closely related to the business field and the FBLA goals.
>
> ### Description
>
> Because our project dealt with a very sensitive topic, we felt it should be studied very discreetly. We decided to collect the data in anonymous surveys mailed directly to the school. The surveys would question the recipients about spending patterns, financial services, agriculture expenses and demographic information.

In order to develop a survey that addressed a diversified economy within Miner County, we asked our FBLA advisory board for their input and help. Working with the board not only increased validity for our project and survey, but it allowed members to work with local business leaders and learn about their concerns for our community.

Several excellent ideas were obtained from meetings between the advisory board and FBLA members, such as, the installation of automatic teller machines, the use of business credit cards and the possibility of drive-up window banking. These ideas would strengthen local business and increase the flow of cash in our community.

We proceeded to develop our survey. It asked recipients what percent of their disposable income they spent on various products and if they made these purchases locally. In addition, it asked what factors would influence recipients to shop locally. This basic information would provide the data needed for the implementation of our project.

We then held a meeting for all Miner County business owners to present a rough draft of our survey. We explained our project and gave them the opportunity to voice any concerns they had with the survey or the project itself. The survey was then revised and sent by mail to 1000 registered voters in Miner County.

FBLA members were asked to contact each survey recipient by telephone, encouraging them to complete the survey and thanking them for their support. This process was an opportunity to involve everyone in our chapter, and it created the chance to remind recipients of the importance of our project.

Approximately 60% of the surveys were returned. (We felt this outstanding percentage, which was nearly three times the national average, was due to the personal contact by our members.) The results of the survey were then recorded and evaluated by FBLA members using a computer database.

The local newspaper published the results of our survey and the basic spending suggestions we had developed. We also wrote letters to each business in Miner County, notifying them of the services the people of our community want.

Evaluation and Results

The spreadsheets ... explain the effects of increased spending within Miner County based on the Howard-FBLA Community Cash Flow Project. These projections are based upon the percentages which were averaged from the returned surveys based upon the number of people in Miner County. This is not a scientific analysis, but hopefully it will give people within Miner County a projection of what increased spending of disposable income within the county would do according to the following purchasing categories.

The purchasing categories and their assigned letters which are used on the spreadsheets are as follows:

A=GASOLINE/AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIES FOR PERSONAL USE
B=AUTOMOTIVE REPAIRS
C=FOOD & BEVERAGE SERVICE/RECREATION
D=PRESCRIPTIONS/MEDICAL SUPPLIES
E=GROCERIES
F=CLOTHING
G=GIFTS
H=LUMBERYARD PRODUCTS/HARDWARE
I=HOUSEWARES/PERSONAL CARE ITEMS/OTHER RETAIL
J=BASIC HEALTH OR MEDICAL SERVICES

> The spreadsheets use the mean of each income level (except $14,000), the average percent budgeted, average percent spent in Miner County, percent of proposed increased spending within Miner County, number of projected people within the designated income levels and the economic factor of 3.1. (The economic factor is the number of times one dollar will turnover within the county in which it was spent.)
>
> We used a proposed spending increase of 10%.
>
> The number of people within the designated income levels was taken from the South Dakota Department of Labor.
>
> The percentages and rankings of each of the categories or factors are listed on the Cash Flow Survey which is [provided].
>
> The total increase in disposable spending in Miner County for all ten categories was $2,302,384. After applying the 3.1 economic factor, the total was $7,137,390.40.
>
> People were amazed by the figures we had compiled. A positive outlook for our community was created by the possibilities of a brighter tomorrow through increased local spending ....
>
> It is safe to say our project was a success, and the progress will not stop here. It is just beginning.

After the FBLA completed its analysis and reported on the impact a 10% increase in local spending would have on Miner County, the students and local citizens were amazed to witness an increase in local spending of 27%. The result was an astounding $15,600,000 more in taxable sales spent within Miner County. This all occurred in a year in which 100 workers were laid off by the largest employer in Miner County. This increased tax revenue boosted support for essential county services providing hope that Miner County residents can stem the tide that is disintegrating rural communities in this heartland.

Students, parents, teachers and community members in Howard have felt first-hand the potential power of putting place at the center of the school curriculum. The Cash Flow project has inspired a number of other place-based curricular responses to community needs/concerns. Mary Stangohr, a Howard High School English teacher who makes place central to her work, speaks of her motivations:

> In our school and community, we are working together for our continued future. Our lofty goal, the heart of our North Central Accreditation Plan, is to develop a sustainable community which meets the basic needs of its citizens. Our community is only as well off as its most destitute citizen. This is a community that must grow and develop within its ecological limits, and the people living here today must inhabit it in ways that sustain it for future generations.
>
> We realize that ours is a commitment that requires the combined efforts of all of our citizens: not just the school, not just Main Street, not just the farmers, but all of us working together.

Stangohr addresses the philosophy of the work around place in Miner County as well as the inspirational impetus the former principal and subsequent superintendent, Jim Lentz, provided.

> Howard County High School began to take a broad perspective on education when Jim Lentz became the principal in 1994. His philosophy of education allowed teachers to broaden their students' learning and extend the boundaries of our school beyond the four walls of the classroom. Teachers were asked to teach one community focused lesson each month. The only limits to the lessons were the limits of the teacher's imagination. Education was broadened from the "2-by-4" teaching of our traditional past (students learned everything between the two covers of the book and the four walls of the classroom) to a curriculum that encouraged student learning beyond the immediate classroom. In some cases, students might not touch a book throughout an entire unit.

As a result of this change in the curriculum, students are finally being told that they don't have to leave town to be successful. They are finally being taught the skills to create a job, not just the skills to find a job. As teachers, we are encouraged to localize our curriculum, rather than standardize it.

Howard High School's success so far has been based on four ideals:

1. Students and teachers must understand their home, their community. This includes knowledge of the local history, economics, and government. According to Jim Lentz, [who became] superintendent in 1997, "Only then can you decide to build on your history, or perhaps not to repeat certain aspects."

2. The community is committed to making certain the basic needs of all citizens are met. Miner County is a poor region with some people living in desperate situations. Fifty percent of the population earns less than $20,000 a year. Food, clothing, shelter, and education are basic needs of every person that we will continually work to provide.

3. The school promotes sustainability. Long-term goals include supporting agriculture and other land uses that don't harm the environment, and promoting economic activity that will make businesses and the school district financially stable.

4. Revisiting democracy is essential for all of our citizens, the young and elderly. The school will help students and community members understand issues surrounding topics including corporate farming, antitrust concerns in agribusiness, government services, and others, as well as political solutions to those issues.

The number and scope of Miner County-related projects continues to grow. Following is a sample of some of the more extensive initiatives.

Growing Place-Based Work at Howard High School

In 1998, members of the local FFA (Future Farmers of America) chapter planted an apple orchard and a garden with summer produce. The local grocery store arranged to have students sell their produce at a lower price than other, more conventional sources. After considerable student conducted research, the school built a greenhouse to allow the production of crops year-round. The work developed into a student organized corporation with students as stockholders. Students work year round in the greenhouse and orchard and are paid out of the profits from produce sales. Upon graduation, students sell their stock to future stockholders (fellow students).

The natural relationship of a number of disciplines becomes apparent as students and teachers work in the greenhouse and in the orchard. Students learn organic crop production, accounting, marketing and entrepreneurial skills. This effort has the potential to grow in many new directions. It may one day evolve into a landscaping business as well as a food processing business featuring homemade jellies and salsa.

Former Superintendent, Jim Lentz, speaks to the importance of such work:

> Between 1982 and 1992, Miner County lost more than 100 farms, declining from 527 farms to 424. Right now, ten cents of every dollar goes for food in the country. Yet only one of those cents makes it back to the producer. A farm area like Miner County shouldn't be shipping all it produces out, then buying it back, with the profits going to those who promote and package the product. The garden and the orchard are first steps to the ultimate goal of a sustainable community.

A Rural Resource Center, housed in Howard High School serves as a place for both students and community members to conduct research, create and display educational pieces about Miner County and its history and provides a meeting space for local groups. Mary Stangohr relates the value of such a space as follows:

> Miner County once had 9,000 residents and seven high schools. Now there are about 2,800 residents and one high school. Similar to national trends, local farms have gotten larger, but the numbers of farmers have decreased. Most of the small towns in our county have become all but ghost towns, and most students graduate, move away, and never find their way back to live. They visit occasionally to hunt and celebrate the holidays.
>
> Working from the premise that any school improvement plan will be absolutely irrelevant if there are not students or communities to serve, Howard's improvement plan will focus on the community as a whole. We anticipate the process will be long, and possibly controversial, but certainly educational for all parties who choose to be involved.
>
> With a portion of the $25,000 grant from the Program for Rural School and Community Renewal, Howard established a Rural Resource Center within the school. This is a place open to the public and the school for a variety of needs. It holds a resource library dealing with issues such as ecology, agriculture, health care, education, public policy, energy, poverty, and environment. Organizations such as the Child Protection Team, the Student Council, Scouts, FBLA and others have full access to the center for meetings. It is open for coffee, research and small talk.
>
> Local historians and school children use the walls to display mementos of related topics in the community. In the past, the room has celebrated Miner County's veterans, churches, rural schools, and is currently displaying the clubs and organizations both active and inactive in our county. Photos, historical artifacts, and writings of school children generated by local topics are always on display.

Currently, Howard students are working together, under the direction of 11th grade students, to create a display entitled Women of Miner County: A Great Rural Resource. The exhibition features interviews gathered by students who spoke with women who had some connection to the history of Miner County. The 11th graders developed the questions for the interviews which were conducted by the students in the other five grades (7, 8, 9, 10 and 12). Students were encouraged to interview people they did not already know well. Their research also included the collection of artifacts for exhibition--quilts, kitchen appliances/devices, personal items, clothing, recreational materials--which, historically, consisted primarily of needlework. Students solicited a recipe and piece of advice from each of the interviewees. They will ultimately write and publish a book, featuring these women's recipes and advice, and in so doing, create and preserve an historical archive unique to Miner County. The profits from this publication will fund future historical research--documenting and commemorating the sites of 75 one room school houses in the county, of which only one is still intact.

Stangohr feels that a teacher's imagination is the only limitation to exploring place within a curriculum. We include here an extensive curriculum developed and carried out by Stangohr to show the complexity of tasks and depth of learning that students are engaged in at Howard High School.

The Importance of Place
Howard High School
Mary Stangohr, English teacher

> Miner County's county seat is Howard. Our county once supported eight communities: Argonne, Carthage, Epiphany, Fedora, Roswell, Canova, Vilas and Howard. Our population had a high of nearly 9,000 people in the early 1900s to a current population of less than 3000. Today Howard is the only living community. Howard has the only high school and junior high. This will be the last year for the Canova Grade School and Carthage Grade School has only a few years left. All of these communities deserve to be studied in depth, and this is a long range goal. However, for this year I will limit our immediate studies to the community of Vilas and selected surrounding fields. Students will study the community of Vilas for the following reasons:

1) It is very close (only four miles west of the school) and we can visit Vilas often and quite easily.

2) The history of Vilas is full and rich. At one time the city was larger than Howard, and battled Howard for control of the County Seat. (A fire destroyed most of Vilas soon after a suspicious vote gave the County Seat to Howard. Apparently more people than were registered voted in the election.) The growth and decline of Vilas followed the cattle industry and the railroad movement. Vilas once supported two railroads, the Northwestern and the Milwaukee, each having its own depot.

3) Resources that we will need are readily available. We have many residents in our community who are past residents of Vilas and are willing to talk to us and take us on walking tours of the remaining community. Members of the Historical Society and the people in charge of the local museum have offered to help by sharing the history of the community in any way they can. The Miner County Court House is literally in the back yard of our school, and it has the materials that we need to research.

4) By studying Vilas, students will get a better understanding of the importance of place and the situation their community is in. Studying Canova and Carthage may be too painful for the students who currently live there.

It is my intention to have the students visit Vilas on the third day of school (The first two will be orientation and introduction of the class). I hope to have the students visit Vilas several times. (In a perfect world I could design this class and not worry about bus and bus driver availability, the weather, and being late to the next class.) As with all things, this is not a perfect world, and I will shoot for the several site visits listed on the following pages.. In keeping with the spirit of the summer class [I participated in] in Kansas, at the Land Institute, it is my intention to hold class outside each day. I have a corner room at the school and easy access to the open area outside. A quilt stand will be by the door and students will be encouraged to bring old blankets that can be used to sit on during class time. I hope to have the class run something like the following:

Day 1
Hello to Junior English and class. Objectives and goals will be discussed.

Day 2
Introduction to the community of Vilas. Class will discuss questions about the community that they hope to have answered in the course.

Explanation of how the journal will be kept and graded (25%).
Worksheets and research will be a portion of this grade as well.
Explanation of the writing assignments to be done and how they will be graded (25%).
Quizzes will make up (20%) of the grade.
Final project will make up (25%) of the grade.
Appropriate behavior of the students while on field trips and during their time outside will be outlined and that too will be a portion of the grade (5%).

The study of Vilas will be the introduction to the book ***Broken Heartland*** by Osha Gary Davidson. I expect the entire project with the text ***Broken Heartland*** to last the first nine weeks. We may then take a closer look at the Industrial Landscape by reading the text ***The Jungle*** by Upton Sinclair during the second nine weeks.

Day 3: Our Beginning

We will take a bus to Vilas and look around. All that remains is an Odd Fellow's Lodge and a store. Lifetime resident Glenda DeHaven will talk to the class about the location of homes and businesses. Mrs. DeHaven is one of six residents still living in Vilas and grew up there. She has an excellent memory and many photographs of the community.

After she has spoken and students have asked questions, we will spread out and write about our first impressions of the place. We must realize that class time is extremely limited and that visits must be often and brief. If students do not have enough time to do their first impression, that can be done as soon as possible.

Day 4

We can continue to write our first impressions of Vilas if students are not finished. Class discussion of the history of Vilas will continue. We will list some questions that we will hope to answer during the course of study. Questions I hope they will ask may include basic questions such as: Why was Vilas settled here? Who were the people who chose to live here? How did they make their livings? What were the town's businesses, schools, churches? Where did all the people go? More in-depth questions may include: Why didn't this community make it? What worked against it? What happened to all the people? What is happening to our community today? What can we learn about our own situation by looking at Vilas? What can we do about the situation that we are in and our community is in?

Project

Students can choose to either trace their family's origins and write about their arrival to Miner County and develop a family tree or they may talk to a family that lived in Vilas at one time and write about them. Students may ask questions such as: When did they come to Miner County? What did they do while living in Vilas? Why did they leave?

Day 5: The Natural Landscape

We will be using a native sod pasture located four miles south of the school. I own the land, and we can explore the area and remove any samples of plants that we feel we need. The land also has buffalo wallows and even early wagon train tracks. Local experts will help the students identify the plants and animals. Our local science teachers can help, and I will also ask for the help of the county extension agent, Jim Krantz. I hope to have the county Game Warden, Jeff Grendler, talk to the students about animals that are indigenous to our area and any other information that he may have. My husband, Gary, and father-in-law, Roy Stangohr, will also make themselves available for any help they can offer (which may be extremely limited) while we are on field trips.

Projects

Students will gather samples of wild grasses, weeds and flowers and identify them. A project can involve students identifying the plants by their scientific name and common name and then report what they were used for.

Students will be given disposable cameras to photograph any of the plants or landscape. They will use these for their final projects and they may incorporate some of the photography in an art/poetry project later.

Cameras will be used during the entire project to photograph guest speakers, people and family members that they interview, the community of Vilas and anything they may want to use.
I hope that it won't be too late in the fall, and the students can see how the wallows were used as shelter. A person (or animal) can lie in the wallows and not be seen.

Day 6: Projects

We will identify and mount on bulletin boards the samples of plants, weeds and flowers. Students will identify what the plants were used for by Native Americans and early settlers. Other students may wish to press or dry flowers and plants to be used later for potpourri, art work, stationary or bookmarks or to mount on the rubbings of graves we will do later when we research people in the community. Students themselves may think of other uses for the samples. (Currently I am collecting, drying and pressing samples of summer wildflowers because they may not be available by September.)

Day 7

This will be a continuation of the previous day. Students will write two types of poems using one of the plants as an inspiration of the poetry. They will write a Haiku poem. This type of poem limits their word choice and forces them to search for the best word that will fit.

The second poem is called a diamonte. It involves writing different kinds of words in eight lines. The lines are sequenced as follows:

Example:

1 noun	Reflections
2 adjectives	Spotted, wet
3 action words	Moving, jumping, mixing
4 feeling words	Joyous, exhilarating, exciting, airy
4 feeling words (change of topic)	Restless, dramatic, confusing, helpless
3 action words	Blending, shaping, melting
2 adjectives	Sparkly, fragile
1 noun	Water

-- by Heidy Chauang

Project

Students will incorporate art and poetry in their presentations. They may want to copy the art of Matisse and use poetry to describe the art work. They may use the samples of flowers and plants with the poetry. They may develop their own type of expressive art and poetry. The theme for the project will be "the importance of place."

We will discuss what it takes to maintain a healthy prairie. We will read "What the Prairie Teaches Us" by Paul Gruchow and answer the related worksheet.

Day 8 - Day 13

I expect that it will take approximately a week or more to work through this portion. We will conduct the class outside even though we will not necessarily be going to Vilas. I am fairly certain the following materials will be used, however I am not certain yet the order these will be presented to the class. I also do not know when the guest speaker will be able to come.

Native American Influence to our Land

We will read a few Native American legends from *An American Indian Anthology* by Benet Tvedten, O.S.B. This powerful book was written in 1971. We will look at the types of beliefs of the people and we will examine the world through their eyes. From the introduction of the book:

> Literature is always an authentic source of discovery. Understanding and appreciation of a particular culture can be found in the stories and poetry of the people... This anthology is intended to be a discovery for the many Americans whose superficial knowledge of the Indians has been derived from history books, Hollywood films, and opinions like those expressed by John Wayne. (Tvedten, Introduction)

Essay assignment

Students will compare these legends and myths to Greek mythology.

We will read *The Way To Rainy Mountain* by N. Scott Momaday, a wonderful example of the oral tradition of the Kiowa Indians that also explains the legends and myths of the people. (We will use *The Way To Rainy Mountain* as an example of recording oral histories when we write our own oral histories later in the unit.)

Project

Each of the students will be given a blank sheet of paper and map to sketch in the rivers, cities and forests and deserts, etc. of each state. Then they will put in the reservations. We will do all of the states in the U.S.

South Dakota has eight reservations: Standing Rock Reservation, Cheyenne River Reservation, Pine Ridge Reservation, Rosebud Reservation, Lower Brule Reservation, Crow Creek Reservation, Yankton Reservation, and Sisseton Reservation. We will then ask some questions during class discussions.

Class discussion questions and journal questions will be along the following lines:

Why was this land selected as reservation sites? What economic advantages or disadvantages are there in these areas? How are the taxes done in reservations? What are reservations like today? What problems (social, economic, personal) do Native Americans suffer from? How are these similar to ours?

We'll take a look at the population figures of the Native Americans and relate those figures to our situations.

How were women treated in their culture? Why did so many Native Americans die? Can we map the fall of their culture? How is their culture celebrated today? How is their culture exploited? How can we relate this to our own situation?

Research topics may include:

Researching the treaties that were made with the Native Americans. The Black Hills of South Dakota are considered sacred by the Native Americans and were once part of the Reservation. We could research the history of the Black Hills and how the Native Americans lost the Black Hills. (Gold and the movement of the pioneers were major issues in the loss of the Hills.)

How do the liquor companies target Native Americans? How ethical is it? How does the abuse of alcohol by Native Americans reflect on our society?

How do students feel about the use of Native American names as mascots for sports groups, both nationally and locally? What are the feelings of those around the nation?

What types of problems (social, economic, personal) do Native Americans have? How are these problems similar to the problems of people around here?

Other Native American literature and poetry that we will cover will include:

"She Had Some Horses" a poem by Joy Harjo
"Making Do" a short story by Linda Hagan
"Run" a short story by Barry Milliken
"Powwow 79, Durango" a poem by Paula Gunn Allen
"Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question" a poem by Diane Glancy
(Most of these are in the anthology *Braided Lives)*

Journal entries may include:

They will copy the writing style of "She Had Some Horses" and "Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question." By copying the style and rhythms, not the content of the poems, the students are forced to look very carefully at the poems and analyze what is being said.

The remaining Native American material will be used to have group, class discussions and journal entries.

We will watch clips of the movie *Thunder Heart* which was filmed on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to show portions of Native American economic conditions. Very few of the students have ever visited any of the reservations in our state. The ones who have probably hunted or have family members who gambled there.

We will probably take a day for a written test of some kind. I don't have it written yet, but it will involve comparing the literature of Native Americans and incorporating themes and conditions of today.

Project Field Trip:

Several rocks and petrified wood pieces will be shown to the students. I hope to take the students on an artifact search, or at least teach the students how to search for artifacts. Wolf Creek runs through our land and we can use the pasture to conduct the artifact search. Most of the students are from farming families and the students may do an artifact search on their own time if we need to.

I have learned in the past that it is not so much the "product" as the "process" when working with children. It will be nice if we can actually find an artifact or fossil, but the process of learning what to look for and how to do it is very important too.

Journal entry or Writing assignment

Using the method Annie Wilson (at the Land Institute) taught us, we will hold one of the rocks, artifacts or fossils and imagine we were the last person to hold it. What an expressive, imaginative way to connect the past with the present!

We will conclude this portion of **Native American Influence** on the land with the reading and discussion of "Letter Of Chief Seathl" written by the chief of the Suwamish Tribe to the President of the United States of America, Franklin Pierce, in 1854.

We will do a choral reading of this letter. Each person reads the letter silently and then selects a line or paragraph that means something to him/her. Next, each student reads the selection chosen from the letter aloud. The reading continues around the room until each student has spoken. It does not matter if several people choose the same selection, they continue to reread it aloud. This just emphasizes how important that particular passage is. This truly is a chorus because of the variety of voices shared. We hear them all: the soft sopranos and the low bass voices and all those in between. It forces the students to hear each other, and we get a clear idea of their feelings from their selection.

Journal entry

How do Chief Seathl's words speak to you? Answer Chief Seathl's letter. What do you have to say to him?

Guest Speaker

I hope to have Native Americans speak to the class about their culture. My first choice is Tim Giago, editor and publisher of the *Lakota Times* in Rapid City. Another choice of guest speaker is Mary Crow Dog author of *Lakota Woman*, I would like to have either of them speak on their culture's history, present and the future. Giago attended school on the reservations and has written about it many times. Mary Crow Dog's book describes the experiences of Wounded Knee.

These questions all help to set up the next question that will be used as a theme for the rest of the class periods as we continue to look at the value of place in the study of *Broken Heartland*.

****How can the loss of the family farmer and the rural schools be correlated to the loss of democracy?*****

Guest Speaker
I hope to have John Miller, a professor of history at South Dakota State University and author of *Highway 14*, speak to the students on the development of our country. The focus of the presentation will be the difference of opinions between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton regarding the division of land and the Homestead Act of 1862. I would like to have him compare eastern states to the development of western states. When did these states see the decline we are seeing now? Did these states see the same decline? Have these states seen a decline in their agrarian society? I would like him to give a national view on the topic.

Class discussions and journal entries will center around the following topics and questions:

What were the differences of opinions between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton regarding the division of the land? Did the Homestead Act of 1862 accomplish Jefferson's dream of an agrarian nation of small landowners? What went right? What went wrong? What has actually happened in the past 125 years regarding the possession of land? Other questions may include:

Did the dream of having the yeoman farmer own the land and govern himself come true? How long will the American dream of being your own boss hold out for the farmers and small business men? What happened to the farmers? Where did they all go? Did the Homestead Act accomplish its goals?

****An in-depth discussion of the Jefferson and Hamilton ideals will again be addressed during the reading of Broken Heartland. *****

Journal entry and essay assignments may focus on the following:
Students will be asked to interview farmers, retired farmers, women, and people in the agriculture industry for their opinions on farming operations of today and yesterday. They will also ask for opinions on the future of agriculture.

Day 14 - Day 17
I plan to take four or more days to complete this portion of the work. I hope to conduct the classes in the Rural Resource Room at Howard High School. This room was funded by the Annenberg Rural Challenge and currently has a wonderful display of one-room school houses.

The Agrarian Landscape
We will begin this portion of the project with a look at the Forward by John Milton to the novel *Lord Grizzly* by Frederick Manfred. Milton uses the Forward to describe what the mentality of the men (especially mountain men) was during the early 1800s. We will read other selected works and discuss how the concept of "manifest destiny" determined the settling of our nation as we look at the migration of the white settlers to the plains.

We have a wonderful school library and Miner County Historical Society with many books explaining the beginnings of the early settlements of our county. We have books on the settlers of Fedora, Carthage, Epiphany, Howard, and Canova. I am still looking for books or pamphlets on the early settlements of Roswell, Vilas, and Argonne. The Miner County newspaper is willing to let us use their morgue dating back over 100 years for research. (In the past they have allowed me to take original papers to our school to use as reference material.)

Class discussions and journal entries will center around the settlement of our state. We will discuss fence laws vs. herd laws. We will see how the invention of barbed wire changed the way cattlemen did business.

We will look at population figures of our state and analyze how the population has changed. We will discuss the forces behind the changes.

Day 18

We will return to Vilas and take our journals. We will have guest speaker and local historian Vince Bruer help us. Mr. Bruer grew up in the area and while we are taking a walking tour of the town, he will help the students understand some of the following questions: ..

Why was this spot chosen as a place to settle? What was appealing about it? What advantages did it offer to the people who lived here? Who settled here? What type of person did it take to come to the harsh land of Miner County and stick it out? What was life like when people came here and traded here?

We will find out about the businesses that once thrived in the community and when they disappeared. Who didn't stay? Why didn't they stay or why couldn't they stay?

Journal entries and essays may include the following:

Interview a community member and record how that family came to Miner County. Have them include any and all information in the story such as: jobs, schools, economic conditions, illness, death, other....

Project may include:

Students research the history of the land or home they live on. They may list the former owners and the value of the property at the time of each sale if found. We will use the Register of Deeds at the Court House. We will research people in the community or families. We'll check birth and death records.

Field Trip

We'll follow up the research with a field trip to the two local cemeteries looking for the graves of the people we have researched. Once we locate the grave (or any grave) we will do a rubbing of the grave. I hope to have plexiglas for the students to frame the rubbings as a remembrance of the person. We can include art work or pressed or dried flowers in the frame. We can also look up any Bible verses that may be on the tombstone. We can translate the verses if they are written in German or Norwegian or any other language.

We will learn about interviewing and recording oral histories. The students will research the history of the name of their community or any community in South Dakota. How did it get its name?

One class period will focus on the Rural Resource Room at the high school. Currently on display is a remake of the one-room school house including a map of the country schools in our county. Our county had 73 schools at one time.

Guest Speaker

I hope to have retired one-room school teachers visit with the students about what school was like before running water, cars, TVs and the Internet. Several ladies in the community will be able to assist in this. They include: Joyce Haak, LuLu Anderson, Leta Trusty and Delores Walter, author of *D's Country Diary*. (This will tie in with a later portion of the project as students look at the work force. Students will realize that career opportunities were extremely limited to women ... teacher, secretary, nurse, and cashier, etc. They will also realize that once a woman married, her "job" was to stay home and raise the family.)

We can use county maps from the Court House to map out just how many farms have disappeared.

Projects may include:
Students will analyze townships in the county. They will study the old maps of the county. We can divide the county into townships and see where the farmers once were. They will look at current maps and note how few farmers are left. We can also look at the people living on the farms. Are they farming? Are they making their living off the farm, or are they living in the country earning their income elsewhere?

Journal entries and essays may include the following topics:
How can we relate the depletion of the schools and farmers to our own situation today? What was the turning point for the farmers? Why have their numbers dropped? What is the reason that schools struggle to economically educate the rural students of today? How is school funding done and why is it done in this manner? Is this the best way to continue? How can we fairly and economically educate all children publicly? Is public education going to last?

Guest Speaker
I would like to have recently retired Superintendent Loren Scott talk to the students about school funding and the cost of running a school. If he is unable to attend, I will ask Business Manager Marcia Sherman to present the same information to the students.

Day 19: The Industrial Landscape

We will begin by looking at the history of the Trail Drive Era, the Railroad Era and the Trucking Era. As the discussions progress, we will look at how our local industries have changed according to these eras.

We will research the introduction of the railroads to our state and the birth and growth of communities.

Guest Speaker
I hope to have Lynn Anderson, Executive Vice President of Dakota Minnesota and Eastern Railroad, as a guest speaker for the students. DM&E's headquarters is in Brookings, South Dakota and this company is investing $22 billion to rebuild and upgrade the railroads. I hope to have him explain the history of the railroads, its impact on the economy and communities and discuss its future and then open up the class to discussion.

Class project will include:
A timeline to visualize how the railroads moved in and out of Miner County. Students will see how the communities were dependent on the railroads. Students will see that in less than ten years of the railroad's leaving Miner County, two high schools (Carthage and Canova) closed. We can also check population figures and see how the population declined too.

Journal assignments may include taking notes and commenting on the presentation of guest speakers. They may also write a story for the newspaper from the information given by the guest speaker.

I would like to have people who remember using the railroads to transport their livestock describe the difference between then and now. (I am still looking for these people.)

We will discuss the changing role of the rural woman. In the Industrial Landscape no more does the American farm wife remain home and care for the children. She is now expected to work outside of the home. Many times her wages help to keep the farm going, or she has a job that offers fringe benefits that a farmer cannot afford (insurance).

Essay assignment may include:
Students will interview and write a biography or give an oral history of a local woman. Students will be asked to select any working woman to visit and write about. South Dakota has the highest percentage of working mothers in the nation so all students will be able to find someone who works.

Questions students may ask the women include:
How has the role of the woman changed since you were a child? How has the work force changed? Why has it changed? Where do you work? What do you actually do? What are the job availabilities in our area? What is it about your job that you like? What is it about it that you would like to change? How has education affected your career choice? How do you handle the chores around the house, child care? Who stays home if a child is sick? Other...

Guest Speaker
I hope to have Gunda Gosmire talk to the students. She is the grandmother of a former student. I learned of her life story through a class project two years ago. Mrs. Gosmire lived in Poland as a child and escaped Hitler's army in the 1940s.

Day 20: Continuing until the completion of the projects
It is my intention to include the **Aesthetic Response** in each area that we are studying. It will include final projects that will allow students to use any creative outlet they wish. These may include poetry, photography, painting, music, etc. Students may use videos for their projects. They may also interview someone for a final project or write a research paper on a related topic. I will offer guidelines to the students, however, almost anything they create will be acceptable. All projects must celebrate "The Importance of Place." Related themes that will also be included in the final projects are the land, the loss of community, and the loss of democracy.

I will purchase disposable cameras for the students to use when we have field trips, guest speakers, class discussions outside or any related topic.

The students' work will be on display during the concert by Larry Long in November. Larry Long will be working with grade school students and community elders to write songs celebrating Howard and the rural way of life.

Other projects on display by the students will include: Haiku and diamonte poetry, photography of the field trips, guest speakers, and people interviewed with captions, the rubbings of graves, pressed and dried flowers displayed on bookmarks or stationary, interviews of people, family trees and oral histories of local people, other projects decided by the students.

We will invite the public, including people who were interviewed and guest speakers, to attend this concert and see the displays of the work. I then hope to have the students' work on display in the Rural Resource Room for several months.

Stangohr's curriculum outline demonstrates the power of knowing and using local resources to engage students deeply in issues that concern them. The following letter to U.S. Senator Tom Daschle of South Dakota, written by a student in the first year of this extended place-based curriculum, attests to the level of student engagement and learning that takes place in Howard.

October 15, 1996
Howard High School
Howard, SD 57349

Dear Senator Daschle:

I am writing you to ask a favor; rural America and I need both your help and advice. As part of a class assignment, I had the opportunity to read *Broken Heartland*, and it brought to my attention issues I normally do not think about. While reading I was filled with many different emotions. At times I wanted to cry and at times I got angry and was ready for a fight.

I am sure you have many fond memories of growing up in South Dakota as I do. I am not sure towns like Howard will be here when I want to raise my own children. Smaller farms are disappearing because they are not able to compete with large corporations and super farms. My family has always farmed, and made a decent living. Today, more than ever, we are at the mercy of agricultural conglomerates who control grain and livestock markets, gasoline markets, seed markets, almost every aspect of farming except labor. Rural America seems to be providing them with that.

Senator Daschle, I am not asking you to feel sorry for me, my family, or my community. As a favor, accept this gift, a copy of the book *Broken Heartland*. Please take time to read both the book and the other literature I have enclosed. I would appreciate it if you would respond to the questions I have enclosed to help me make sense of the conditions in rural America.

Sincerely,

Sarah Callies and HHS Class of 1998

Included with the letter and a copy of *Broken Heartland*, among other documents, was the following list of questions compiled by Sarah and her classmates at Howard High School.

QUESTIONS

1. In the notes of pages 198 and 199 of *Broken Heartland*, there is a *partial* list of Cargill products. This partial list includes aluminum, iron, rubber, and electronic parts all used to build tractors. It also includes gasoline, hybrid seeds, and fertilizers. Knowing that farmers pay retail for all of the above mentioned items to put in their crops, then sell their crops on a market dominated by only three to four major corporations (one of which is Cargill), for wholesale prices, then turn around and buy breakfast cereal at retail prices, please consider the following questions:

    A. Can you suggest a monopoly does not exist after reading the piece from the Antitrust Law and Economics Review?
    B. If a monopoly does exist, why isn't something being done?
    C. If a monopoly does not exist horizontally, does it exist vertically?
    D. How can Anne Bingaman possibly head up the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice with her ties to Fortune 50 and 500 companies?
    E. Ethically and legally, how can federal court judges not allow jury trials on antitrust lawsuits?
    F. Ethically, how can federal court judges take all expense paid Florida vacations to learn about antitrust law at the expense of major corporations?
    G. Knowing that only seven federal court judges have been removed in the history of the United States for violating ethics, how can this removal process be changed so unbiased judges can hear antitrust lawsuits?

2. Jesse Jackson, in his speech at the Democratic National Convention said "the top wealthiest 1% of Americans own as much as the bottom 95%...." Out of every $1.00 spent on food, only $.10 goes to the actual producer. It is estimated that overcharges cost every man, woman, and child $3,000 per year in the United States. That totals over $700,000,000,000. Crime in this country costs only $450,000,000,000. Wouldn't stricter enforcement of the antitrust laws shrink the huge gap between those who have a great deal and those who don't? How would you get this done?

3. Conditions in Miner County, whose population is barely over 2,800, has 356 households with an income of less that $10,000 per year, most of them elderly. In your speech at the Democratic National Convention you said, "men and women who have worked hard all their lives should have the freedom to retire with dignity." What is the government doing to ensure people can retire with dignity? What are the plans for subsidized elderly housing? What can you and I do together to ensure our elders are cared for?

4. According to the 1990 census, 53% of the households in Miner County make less than $20,000 per year. At the Democratic National Convention you said, "Every American who works 40 hours a week should have the freedom to earn a decent living." How can you and I effect changes to ensure this happens not only in Miner County, but nationally?

5. While reading *Broken Heartland*, a classmate of mine commented, "Insurance is not a necessity in our house. If someone gets sick, the hospital has to take us. But when we go to the grocery store, if we don't have much money, we won't get very much. You get what you pay for." Again, at the Democratic National Convention you said, "Every person should be able to buy health care for their children." How can you and I make sure all people can receive affordable health care?

6. One of the great forefathers of our country, Thomas Jefferson, believed that the yeoman family farmer would form the cornerstone of American democracy. Since 1940, the number of farmers has decreased by two-thirds. In the Coda to *Broken Heartland*, Osha Davidson writes: "Small towns and the family farms surrounding them formed the cradle of American democracy. When these institutions are gone, where will democracy flourish? A lesson in field ecology has the last word here, for democracy is a living thing--destroy its habitat and it too will perish." Under the current conditions, can we expect democracy to be alive and well in America?

Senator Daschle responded to the students with a five-page letter responding to each question in detail. He also visited the class and informed them that he had given a copy of *Broken Heartland* to President Clinton after reading it.

The success of place-centered work at Howard High School is amply evident in the description and examples of work carried out there since 1994. But the work has not stopped with these activities.[19] At present, Howard High School students are investigating a troubling statistic: there appears to be a higher rate of certain types of cancer in some counties in South Dakota. With the help of health care experts and epidemiologists, students are constructing a survey to explore this phenomenon, with special emphasis on Miner County. A major concern relates to causes.

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[19] Howard High School staff members have told us that each of the projects needs to be recreated every year. After the initial success of the Cash Flow study, money began to leave the county again. Students and local community leaders have realized that community action needs to be continuously re-engaged. Thus, community vision meetings are regularly convened, through the work of the FBLA, to maintain community awareness of local issues. We will describe the format and organization of these meetings in the final section.

North Coast Rural Challenge Network

As we have seen in the foregoing example, learning about place is about *learning*. One Rural Challenge Project Director noted, "cutting the lawn for the local cemetery, while it gets students out into the community, is not what we consider place-based pedagogy." While volunteer activities and learning to give to one's community are important, they are only first steps to work that is more complex, deep, and enduring. Lauren Sosniak, a Research and Evaluation Associate, reports on some of the North Coast Rural Challenge Network (NCRCN) work she has observed that meets high standards academically and makes a strong local connection.

The examples we have selected represent a different way of planning curriculum than that of Stangohr or Lewicki. This process typically begins with academic content determined by the teacher (or state-wide curriculum) and place is integrated as a natural element into the content area. These three examples portray how academically challenging work can occur at all grade levels--elementary, middle and high school.

Eighth Grade Renewable Energy Work
Mendocino, California[20]

> Mr. Hahn Tobin, an eighth grade science teacher (and a graduate himself of Mendocino High School) was in the second year of his work on the renewable energy project (and his second year as a teacher). Renewable energy is a topic Tobin takes up recurrently during the school year. Early on, in preparation for individually selected student projects, there is a common project in which everyone designs and builds his or her own solar car. The cars are built and tested in the classroom.
>
> Subsequently, students are asked to design their own renewable energy projects. And, because they will also earn social science credit for their work, they are asked to design a project that not only involves renewable energy but also has the potential of improving their community.
>
> When I visited the first week in June, the classroom was filled with mock-ups and various forms for presenting the individual student projects. It was an exciting room, with more on display than could be absorbed easily. The sample projects I saw and noted as I talked with Tobin included the following:
>
> - A project on the resourceful use of pesky plants, prepared by a student named Melanie Fuller. This project was a detailed elaboration of the use of solar and wind energy to make paper out of invasive plants that are very common to the area.
> - A project entitled "Ocean Wave Energy Converters" that uses ocean wave energy to create lightable buoys.
> - A project creating a massive solar greenhouse which was developed around and for a very specific site (the local grammar school). Some people were so impressed with the project that it appears now that the greenhouse may actually be built at the site.
>
> In the best tradition of the Rural Challenge, part of the work on the renewable energy project involves final presentations at a public event. What makes this public event particularly interesting is that local experts in renewable energy (very available in Mendocino) are invited to present their work alongside the work of the students. So, the students doing the projects present their work to the community, and they present as part of the community of experts on renewable energy.

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[20] This material comes from Lauren Sosniak's 1999 report to the Annenberg Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation Program.

Grade Two/Three Literacy Project with Senior Center Collaboration
Anderson Valley, California

This elementary school project, which engages children in writing about and writing with their community, is driven by a number of important intentions and place-specific characteristics and circumstances. Anderson Valley in recent years has seen a dramatic change in population, with a large influx of Hispanic residents. Anderson Valley has had to face the challenge of educating significant numbers of students for whom English is not a native language, and the area has had to face the challenge of integrating people who may not understand or appreciate one another because of cultural differences. The Senior Center Collaboration aimed at helping the historic Caucasian population get to know some of the newcomers to the area; it aimed at helping young students, many of whom did not speak English comfortably, practice speaking, reading and writing in English; and it aimed to teach the different populations (both old and young, and old-timers and new-comers) about each others' histories.

This project began in 1997-98, with a second/third grade class, and continued again the following year with a third grade class. A class of students, including a significant number of students for whom English is not a first language, met every other week with a group of senior citizens at the senior citizen lunch center. At first, the students came for lunch. That turned out to be awkward, for the youngsters and seniors alike, and subsequently the arrangement was that students came for (and served) dessert. The organizing reason for the visit was to talk about a topic designed at the start of the year as a matter of inquiry for the students and senior citizens. A student and a senior were paired, and remained paired for the year-long experience. In the course of the regular meetings, students drafted their essays, and seniors helped them revise and edit the work.

The first year topic was "When I was Young: A Look into the Past Through the Eyes of Primary School Students and Senior Citizens." The second year topic was "Where We've Been: Stories of Travel Written by Ms. Linnea Totten's Third Graders and Their Anderson Valley Senior Center Partners." In both cases, students came to discuss the topic with the seniors, from both the student and senior perspective. Each student then wrote a section for a class book on both when the senior citizen partner was young, and when the student was young (in year two, where the senior had been, and where the student had been).

When I visited in June of 1999, there was a huge map on the Senior Citizen Center wall with markers indicating many of the places that the Seniors and the 3rd graders had been. This map clearly served as a source of much conversation. Also, there were copies of last year's book ("When I was Young") that I noticed two of the Seniors reading from during my visit.

The seniors seemed quite pleased about the collaboration: "Adults don't see grandchildren very often..... Kids don't know old people." "I could see growth from one month to the next. They could read their story back. And ask if they got it right."

And when I visited the students in their classroom they were absolutely eager and enthusiastic about talking about their partners. I asked the 3rd graders what they enjoyed most about the experience and their answers ranged from "being with people more experienced than us," "listening to seniors' stories, so they aren't so lonely," "learning about the past," to simply "eating dessert."

In a variety of ways, this literacy project reminds me of the 8th grade renewable energy project described earlier. They have in common several elements. First, this is a sustained effort, with early work building to something more substantial later on. And second, this is a project that ends with a public presentation of some sort by students, for and with members of the community.

Rural Artists and Artisan Documentation Project (RAAD)
Mendocino, California

The RAAD project provides another example of challenging academic work. This is work done at Mendocino High School by a small group of students with teacher Bill Brazill. RAAD essentially documents, through photography, some of the most prominent artists from the community. Each photograph is of a person situated in his or her art life. It is an incredible collection of work.

The importance of the work is partly local: Mendocino has a history of being an art community. The Mendocino Art Center was instrumental in bringing people to the community. Students had read *Mendocino Rust*, an old book they thought about recreating. They picked 20 artists -- "people who have lived here a long time"--and went to visit those artists with their 8 x 10 view camera. They heard a lot about Mendocino history: "I came here the same way most of your parents did: in a VW bug, with a sleeping bag."

In addition, the importance of the work is partly technical: The RAAD project "was a complete group effort.... We'd go everywhere with two or three photographers." "We'd go to their studio, talk to them for about an hour.... You see lots of potential pictures.... We'd set up possible pictures and keep looking until we agreed, and then take the picture. With an 8 x 10 view camera you only have two tries."

The group of photographers working on this project were joined by other students who wrote about the interviews and conversations with the various artists. Again, the work was presented publicly, this time as a public art/history show. The RAAD project presented its work at the County Supervisors Chambers, in a show entitled "Endangered Species" which included about 10-15 of their photographs. It also planned a public presentation of the work at the 40th Anniversary of the Mendocino Art Center.

Llano Grande Center for Research and Development Projects

Work in the Llano Grande Valley of South Texas demonstrates the deepening and expansion of place-based work that grows out of a deeply felt need in the community. The original place-based curriculum initiative of the superintendent, a former history teacher and project director, and a high school principal has grown into an ambitious and far reaching enterprise called the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development. As with many Rural Challenge/Rural Trust efforts, the impetus for the work began with the intention of building community through place-based learning in the school that honored the community's heritage.

The Valley is mostly agricultural. While Anglo farmers own most of the farmland, Mexican Americans make up the vast majority of the population. Most are farm laborers, 50% are migrant workers spending the planting and harvesting seasons in Michigan or Northern California. Further, Mexican Americans make up 98% of the school population. Yet, textbooks and the official history of Texas provide little information about people of Mexican ancestry in South Texas. The initial scope of Llano Grande's work, therefore, was to document for the first time the social, cultural and economic history of rural South Texas. The original designers of the work believed that students and the community would benefit from documenting and studying their own history.

Three communities--Edcouch, Elsa and La Villa--began this work by having their students collect and publish oral histories of local residents. These stories, along with photographs borrowed from private albums, were published in the locally produced *El Llano Grande Journal.* Students collected the interviews, transcribed them, translated them from Spanish to English and published them in a form that was made public. A second collection of histories in the *Journal* documented the massive effort by Mexican laborers to clear the desert landscape of mesquite, cactus, yucca and other bushes in order to make way for the railroad.

The success of these first issues of the *Journal* was immense. Not only did students collect and disseminate an untold portion of local history, teachers who had not initially been involved in the work saw first-hand the value and community impact of place-based learning.

The Llano Grande Center for Research and Development has focused on three inter-related areas: Curriculum and Assessment; Community and Economic Development; and Policy Reform. The intentions of the Center were published in the *Journal* and disseminated to educators and communities in the Valley. A selection from the first volume of *El Llano Grande Journal*[21] follows:

> How can we establish pride and develop a sense of community? We notice the need to connect to our past, to preserve it for the future and to develop a sense of historical and cultural identity. We recognize the need to improve the social studies and history curricula, and we plan to make them more relevant and meaningful by incorporating local history....
>
> To harness the potential strength of the community, everyone must participate. Our approach must necessarily be inclusive as we propose to employ the talents of students, professionals and paraprofessionals, and the entire community. We believe in the philosophy that effective child development is a product of the entire community's work. At the core of this extensive history research project, then, is the student: student learning, development, and growth.
>
> Our challenge is to move from the traditional methods of instruction where teachers and administrators control, to a more democratic educational process where students, and just as importantly, the community become integral to the decision-making and research processes. Our project is an ambitious one because it promises to employ the participation of so many, but we are convinced that by democratizing the process we can begin to tell our story. Just as importantly, by democratizing work we can begin to prepare our youth and have effective, sustainable development. If we develop and prepare our youth, we assure ourselves of a brighter future for our community....
>
> One immediate concern to confront is the traditional method by which history is taught. Ninety-nine percent of Edcouch-Elsa and La Villa students are of Mexican ancestry, yet our history textbooks treat people of Mexican origin only peripherally. The history of rural South Texas as it unfolded socially, culturally, or economically has yet to be told. Only the region's political history as it relates to the state and national levels has received notice by the mainstream history. Some historians have chronicled the region's past, but their narratives have generally been of the mainstream variety focusing on the major *politicos*, but marginalizing the social, cultural, and even most of the economic aspects of the area's past. Our community thus exists without a thoroughly documented history, and we're all poorer because of that. As we begin to retrieve elements of our past, our students and our community will begin to understand and give shape to a truer and more personal context of themselves and their community. A new history will be born, one which will empower its authors as they work together to give themselves a clearer and richer identity.
>
> The rich history of the complexities of a bicultural, bilingual, and biracial South Texas has yet to be told, and yet is told every day. We listen to it in the traditional *corridos* (folk ballads), and we listen to it as it flows out of elderly Mexican American men as they gather occasionally to make their *pan de campo* (outdoor bread). Or when women meet to weave their complicated *colchas* (quilts), or when they team up for the festive *tomalada* (making tamales) during the holiday season. The history is rich; it is in the people and in

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[21] Co-authors Ernesto Ayala, Carlos García, Mónica Marroquín, and Francisco Guajardo produced *El Llano Grande Journal Vol. 1*, No. 1 in 1997. We include the account for its inspirational qualities, the genuine democratic base that it addresses.

> their stories--in the folk oral traditions. But it is not in the books. And because it is not, young Mexican American students feel that their culture and history are of lesser value. "Did Mexicans not exist at that time?" asked a La Villa student in a United States history class a few years ago. The circumstance prompting the question is not just a shame, but it is also a disempowering process which makes young people feel inferior. We see it everyday. The force of marginalization and exclusion can be profoundly damaging to individual and collective self-esteems.
>
> We will respond to this by writing our own books. As we do that, we will all become empowered: our youth because they will find out about their ancestors' contributions and their own heritage, and the larger society because it will understand that Mexican Americans from rural South Texas are more than what the traditional stereotypes suggest. "We can erect our own Statue of Liberty," said one Edcouch-Elsa student as he climbed Lady Liberty last year. "Why do European immigrants have this to commemorate their past, but we have nothing to show our struggles and history," he continued. Indeed, his insight has moved us, and we intend to begin erecting that symbolic structure of finding out about ourselves through a collective inquiry. We expect that all will be better for it.

With the impact of the original place-based work on students' learning, sense of empowerment, and cultural pride, Llano Grande developed plans to expand place-based curriculum into every discipline at all levels of schooling in Edcouch, Elsa and La Villa. As a starting point, the Llano Grande Center offered high school level courses in Research Methods to Edcouch-Elsa students in which they fully engaged in community-based learning projects. In one of these classes, students and Project Director Francisco Guajardo produced a guidebook for teachers interested in place-based learning centered on the following principles:

The Essence of Place: Experiencing the Environment
Students become aware of the importance of taking care of their surroundings. The awareness fosters a greater concern for continuing world preservation.

The Essence of Yesterday: Experiencing History
Students become aware of their heritage. Knowing their history lays the foundation for further, more meaningful learning.

The Essence of Worth: Experiencing the Economy
Students become aware of their role as responsible citizens who can participate in the community's economy.

The Essence of Unity: Experiencing Spirituality
Students become aware of their personal life experiences dealing with the emotional and spiritual self in individual and collective ways.

The Essence of Community Participation: Experiencing Politics
Students become aware of the need to actively participate in the decision-making process of their city/community.

The Llano Grande Guide to a Pedagogy of Place provided an outline of possible activities at both the elementary and secondary levels.[22]

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[22] For a fuller description of the plan, see *Living and Learning in Schools and Communities: Lessons from the Field* (Rural Trust Research and Evaluation Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1999).

Deepening Place-Based Work at Llano Grande

As part of the emphasis on community development, the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development maintains communications with Edcouch-Elsa and La Villa High School graduates. A database of 60-65 college attendees and an email listserve that informs these college students of events in their local community helps keep ties alive. A number of students now attending colleges began learning about their place through the gathering of oral histories in Edcouch-Elsa and La Villa. An appreciation for their heritage and the desire to contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of their rural homes is being maintained through communication with the Center and students currently in high school. On the first organized Alumni Day in January 1999, thirty students currently attending colleges all over the country returned to Edcouch-Elsa High School for the day to visit classes and to talk to high school students about the experience of college.

A significant number of college students return to their home towns of Edcouch, Elsa and La Villa during the summer to work with the Center on grant writing, curriculum and community development. Two recent summer employees at the Center are committed to returning to the Valley when they graduate and plan to run for the school board in the next election. They now have a vision of community development that sees a need for young people to become leaders of their community. Several others have returned to the community as teachers and are creating and implementing place-based learning in their classrooms. This return of college graduates to their rural homes is a testament to the value of place in the lives of these young adults.

Other college students have presented research they have done on their rural homes and culture at Llano Grande Community Development Seminars. Jos Saldiva, a Stanford University student from Edcouch wrote, for example, about Mexican boys acquiring an American identity through playing football in South Texas. The paper was circulated among Chicano scholars all over the country. The emeritus professor and leader of Chicano Studies at the University of Texas-Austin came to visit Edcouch as a result of reading this paper and has since maintained a close relationship with the Center. Another student, Angie Tello, wrote a screenplay during her graduate studies at Emerson School of Art dealing with the Mexican student walkout in Edcouch in 1968 which was acquired by HBO. As Francisco Guajardo says, "Place-based pedagogy has gone beyond our community. Our students who were with the Llano Grande Center when they were in high school have gone off to college and are writing about their hometowns. They were ethnographers and they continue to be the ethnographers and the academicians."

The Center has also begun to provide the schools and the communities in the Valley with information, opportunities and ideas for furthering the work of community development and place-based learning. An example of its support of place-based learning across the curriculum appeared in an issue of *El Llano Grande Journal* which was authored with the collaboration of high school and returning college students. The projects that follow serve as a set of ideas for expanding the work and appreciation around place in the school curriculum.[23] The sheer enthusiasm for the potential that place-based learning has is evident in this guide.

Llano Grande Center for Research and Development
Ideas for Projects

The following is a sampling of ideas intended to aid teachers and students as they develop projects focusing on local themes. It is by no means an exhaustive list. Teachers should feel free to add to the list or to pursue other local topics they may find more relevant for their instructional needs. Again, this is but a supplement.

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[23] We have abbreviated the listing of projects. For those interested in a fuller listing, write directly to the Llano Grande Research and Development Center, P.O. Box 127 Edcouch, TX 78538.

Social Studies Classes

Archaeology: Teachers and students can work with local archeological sites designated by the Texas Historical Commission's Office of the State Archeologist to find how Indians and the early Spanish dealt with the harsh conditions of the area.

Culinary Arts: Students (and teachers) can learn how to make *tortillas*; study the dietary value of *tortillas*; learn about *tamales, buñuelos, pan de campo, fajitas*, etc.; students can study the effects of Mexican food: good health/bad health; *empacho*, etc.

Economics: Students can study local, regional, and global economies as they directly relate to local people; relevant topics include farming, irrigation, cheap labor, entrepreneurship, formal economy vs. informal economies; study the relationship between race and class within a given economy; how does the economy south of the border compare or contrast with the economy north of the border? How do they impact one another?

Etiquette: Do South Texans behave any differently than do others? Study issues of behavior, manners, respect, etc.

Gender Roles: Study roles of men, women, girls, and boys; roles of grandmothers, grandfathers, *tias, tios;* study *machismo* historically and as a contemporary issue.

Political and Cultural Geography: Study Indian groups who inhabited the Rio Grande delta; study the first Spanish explorations, settlements, and old Spanish land grants given in present-day South Texas; trace the evolving political boundaries as the area changed from Native to Spanish to Mexican, to Republic of Texas, to United States, to Confederate state; study county and township political boundaries; study land formations, water, rainfall, etc.

Mapping: Students can identify who lives in each household of Edcouch, Elsa, and La Villa; they can play the role of Census Bureau by mapping the entire area; the massive data collection can be effectively done through the oral interview process.

Identity: It is a complex but critical theme which can be explored in good depth through the study of history, geography, literature, science, etc.; who are you, individually, and who are we, collectively? It is healthy to have a firm grounding regarding who we are as historical players, as members of families, as members of a community, etc. as seen through the eyes of local people.

Race Relations: Students can study the relationship between Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans locally, regionally, nationally, even internationally. While relations between Mexican-origin people and Anglos were often cordial, the historical record also shows there were times of conflict. A Robert Runyon photograph shows three Texas Rangers with what they described as "Dead Mexican Bandits." It turned out the dead men were ranch hands from Las Norias, a ranching community north of Raymondville.

Religion: Students can study the role of the Catholic church and its importance in the communities; study the emergence of Protestant denominations in the area; understand the role of religion in Indian societies of South Texas during pre-Columbian times.

Timelines: Students can trace local history as it corresponds to national and global events; for example, what was happening in this region when the Founding Fathers of the United States met at Independence Hall in the summer of 1776? It just so happens the Nuevo Santander colony was into its fourth decade of life. One report from the Viceroy's office in New Spain states that in 1757 (when British American colonials were fighting the French in the French and Indian War) 8,993 colonists settled in 24 villas along the Rio Grande, and their livestock totaled some 58,000 horses, 25,000 cattle, 1,874 burros and 288,000 sheep and goats. Clearly, there was robust activity and an abundance of life along the Rio Grande delta well before the United States of America was even conceived.

Language Arts Classes

Cognates: Students can study the derivation of specific words unique to the region; attempting to understand elements of the Tex-Mex dialect can be a challenging academic exercise.

Corridos: Study *corridos* as literature. What do these folk ballads say about people, about community and about history? Are there similarities between *corridos* of South Texas and the musical expressions of people from other parts of the world? Study the *Corrido de Gregorio Cortez*, the *corridos* of heroes and outlaws, and the thousands of other characters whose experiences are tied to a South Texas context. Our students can also write their own *corridos*, just as they compose essays and short stories. Let's expand the boundaries of the traditional canon of American literature, or let's create our own canon.

Folklore: Tales, *leyendas* of the region can be used as literary expressions of culture; those can be compared and contrasted with folklore of other regions, states, or countries. There is a plethora of legends, tales, jokes - all of which can be treated as literature.

Local Literature: The literature on our area may be sparse; but if the literature is insufficient, then we need to create our own. Our students are as creative as any. Let's create the tradition of publishing our own stories so future generations can readily access local literature.

Novels/Plays: Pieces of literature selected by teachers can be more meaningful if they deal with local themes; some of these may be hard to find, but they are out there. Relevant playwrights such as Luis Valdez and Carlos Morton are but a few people to consult, though we should also create our own historical and contemporary drama.

Spanish Classes: Students in Spanish classes can work on their Spanish language skills by translating transcripts of oral interviews done with Spanish-speaking interviewees. Spanish classes can also take a literature approach by writing biographies, stories, poetry, etc., which the Rural Challenge project can then publish. We can begin to create our own Spanish language literature.

Reading Locally and Universally: There is great inherent value in telling, writing, and reading our own stories. But there may be even greater value in comparing our stories to those of people from different places. Is our *La Llorona* similar to the Greek *Medea*, for example. Is *El Cucúi* like the American mainstream culture's Boogie Man? Do Asians or Africans, or other Americans have something similar to our *corridos?* When our students begin to research these questions, they may find that the specificity of their historical and cultural experience is really universal.

Vocational Classes

Building Trades Classes: Students can study the Mexican tradition of building with sandstone, mesquite, mud, adobe, etc. Students can study how that tradition differs from the Indian style of building. Which elements did each use to build? How do early local structures differ from other structures found along the Rio Grande River. Students can study how Camargo, Mier, Guerrero Viejo and other old towns were built by the early Spanish settlers and compare how those structures differ from the *jacal* and other early structures of the Delta area. What about chimneys? How important are water resources for building? Students can study the role of men and women in the construction of homes, etc. Let's study how regional people have worked to construct local structures. Similarly, hand craftsmanship has a long tradition in South Texas, from building fences and *jacales*, to working with computers in the contemporary era.

Computer Classes: Students can develop databases, design newsletters, prepare publication materials, etc. Technology classes will be an important part of our project.

Fine Arts Classes

Themes related to the fine arts are everywhere in our community, ranging from popular culture concepts such as contemporary music and graffiti, to the more traditional religious icons used in the Catholic church to praise life. Traditional art has lost much attention in contemporary Mexican American life for a variety of reasons: among them is the relative neglect we give it in the schools. This is unfortunate because there is much to learn from the old traditions; there are rich symbols of life, death, celebration, rites of passage, etc.

Though we may be losing the art, ironically, we've kept the artists. Numerous youngsters in our community demonstrate incredible musical, drawing, and painting talents. The fine arts, however, are not highly valued in our community, largely because our people are too concerned with issues of economy or in many cases survival. Issues of art, then, are frequently suppressed. We are a creative people, but to revive this relatively dormant creativity, we must allow our youth an opportunity to find their art. It promises to be a gradual process, but one which will bear great creative work.

Local Art Activities: Students can draw, sculpt, paint, photograph, design, etc. on local themes: e.g., photographing an elderly man sitting outside H.E.B.; drawing a sketch of a local woman walking into the local *panaderia;* painting kids playing in *un canal;* designing a local building, etc. These ideas can be central to an art class, and the products can be submitted for competition in art contests.

Works can also be displayed in school hallways, in school offices, in libraries, in community buildings, in public offices, etc.; create your own museums...

Focus on Latin American art, just as we focus on European and mainstream American art; develop your own art shows: campus wide, district wide, or community wide. As many of our art teachers have done, let's continue to nurture our own artists through the study of local themes.

Students can connect local art to holiday themes; be as creative as you can with ideas. One student suggested erecting a type of mural or sculpture in a public place to look similar to the Stations of the Cross at the *Virgen de San Juan* Shrine. Each station, he suggested, can be about an event that has occurred in Edcouch, Elsa, or La Villa history. Each station can include a description of the impact of the event/history involved.

Las Mascaras: Have students make their own *mascaras;* study the meaning behind the creation of this macabre work of art; elementary students especially love this kind of work.

Monument: A student recently suggested erecting a historical structure, because we have nothing like the Statue of Liberty. His suggestion "to commemorate the struggle of Mexican Americans through a symbolic structure" can begin through this project. It can be a local theme pointing to strong local values, but it can also reflect the universality of our struggle--of the struggle of people. There is no limit to what we can do.

Music: Students can learn about the origins of Mexican music: *Conjunto, Tejano,* etc. Instruments such as the *bajo sexto,* the accordian, and the *guitarrón* have an important role in regional and local music. Music contests such as those Mr. Layton sponsors should continue to be encouraged. Let's focus on local themes through music. Let's dance to it too, and let's do it with the entire community. Students can have a music club through which they can sponsor numerous events.

Mathematics

Mathematics in a historical project is very relevant. From studying the utilization of mathematics by the indigenous inhabitants of the Rio Grande delta to the use of mathematics by modern statisticians, we can investigate the impact math has had in the Edcouch, Elsa and La Villa area.

Calendar/Astronomy: Students can investigate how the indigenous people utilized celestial bodies to create a calendar in which they were able to calculate precise agricultural seasons; try to replicate some of these calendars.

Land Studies: Students can familiarize themselves with common units of measurement such as acres, miles, etc. which are commonly used in Edcouch, Elsa and La Villa; students can find out how large the Delta area is.

Population Counts: How accurate is the most recent census? Is the Census Bureau counting every single one of our residents? Let's research to find out. We can use the oral history approach to answer these questions.

Income Research: Asking people how much money they make may be a sensitive question, but if you and your students can find a way to do it, you can conduct an important analysis of income levels in our communities. From data collected, students can then do other demographic analyses and add variables to the study: how much money do men make compared to women? difference in income between ethnic groups? income of single parent homes vs. income of two parent households, etc.

Disease Statistics: Students can call local hospitals, clinics or family practitioners to inquire about which diseases most inflict the residents of the Delta area; from the data gathered students can then compile demographic information matching the most common diseases with the number of people affected by each disease.

Interdisciplinary Studies: Math classes can collaborate with other classes on specific research projects. The City Planning entry above, for instance, can be used for research by both a history and a math class. Measuring dimensions of the city's layout can be done by math students, while history or even geography students can study the extant social and cultural conditions which would allow for processes such as segregation. Students can also study the impact of the railroad on the creation of a town. The possibilities are endless.

Science Classes

The role of the sciences in the Rio Grande Valley cannot be underestimated. From the food we eat to our methods of healing, science in one way or another affects our lives. In our classrooms, the focus should shift to all the important local instances of science; in effect we can bring science to the students. By doing this we promote interest in those subjects that merit important consideration for future generations. The following are suggestions for projects and assignments that can be incorporated into science curricula. Please add your own ideas to the list.

Native Plants and Animals: Students can study the native plants and animals of the Delta area; which are the native grasses, trees, etc.; did buffalo roam the Rio Grande Delta at some point in history? Which are the native birds? Are mesquites native?

Medicinal Uses: Students can study the differences between the use of folk healing methods and traditional medicine use in our community. Study reasons why many locals buy medicine in Mexico. Students can study the meaning of *curar de susto* and other local folk concerns.

Curanderismo: Students can study the role and value of *curanderismo* in the community. What about the role of *parteras* (midwives)?

Illnesses and Diseases: Are there illnesses and diseases common in South Texas? What about high rates of diabetes in the Mexican American community?

Environmental: Students can study environmental issues such as waste in the Rio Grande, and the environmental impact of *maquiladoras* along the border.

Land Studies: What type of soil do we have in the Delta area? How fertile is it for agricultural purposes? Is it adequate for other types of industries? What is the salt concentration in the soil?

- Students can research the historical and present uses of irrigation in agriculture in the delta area;
- Students can study the levels of rainfall in South Texas. Given our water shortages, is this a good place for agriculture?
- Students can study effects of heat on people, on land, and on plants in South Texas. Also study how South Texans deal with heat.
- Students can grow botanical gardens which include native as well as agricultural vegetation.

Oral Histories

To reconstruct the history of our community, we must hear the stories of the people. Much of the history of South Texas is not in the books we study, but they are, instead, in the folk oral tradition. To capture that history, we must conduct oral interviews. Oral interviews can be an integral part of any course's instructional process. Just as a history class can profit greatly from oral interviews, so can a biology class, or an art class, or any other class. A biology class, for example, can ask people specific questions which relate to plants, animals and other life forms with which local people interact.

The oral interview process has a structure. First, students and teachers follow the process of identifying interview subjects, after which the student should ask the subject for permission to be interviewed. Then a questionnaire instrument relevant to the class and the interview subject is developed: included here should be objectives and goals of the interview. After fine-tuning the questionnaire and securing equipment (a tape recorder, cassette, and photo camera, if possible), students should then conduct the interview. The final phase, the transcription, is perhaps the most arduous. Students should type the interview, edit and finalize. Revision of the product would determine whether a follow-up interview is necessary.

Every class should tailor the questionnaire to meet the needs of the class, but every questionnaire should also ask for the same biographical information. An effective format could have two parts: part one asking for standard biographical information and part two asking for questions specific to the needs of the student and class. Part one can follow this model:

Interviewer:
Date of Interview:
Place of Interview (address):
Questions on Interviewee:
Date of Birth:
Place of Birth:
Lived in area since:
Size of family (number of boys? girls?):
People residing in household:

Families living in household:
Level of education:
Income level (optional):
'Education of children:

Every interview should also include an Interview Agreement. Please feel free to use the following format; make as many copies as you need.

Interview Agreement
Rural Challenge Oral History Project

The purpose of the Rural Challenge Oral History Project is to gather and preserve historical documents by means of the tape-recorded interview. Tape recordings and transcripts resulting from such interviews become part of the archives of the Rural Challenge Project. This material will be made available for historical and other academic research by scholars and members of the family of the interviewee.

We, the undersigned, have read the above and voluntarily offer the Rural Challenge Project full use of the information contained on recordings and in the transcripts of these oral history research interviews. In view of the scholarly value of this research material, we hereby assign rights, title, and interest pertaining to it to the Rural Challenge Project at the Edcouch-Elsa and La Villa Independent School Districts.

Interviewer (signature)	Interviewee (Signature)
Date	Date
Name of Interviewer	Name of Interviewee

Economic Opportunities and Community Development Work at Llano Grande

The Llano Grande work has grown well beyond the confines of the school. By engaging the community in the reclaiming of its heritage, with the intention of strengthening it economically, politically and spiritually, the Center has undertaken numerous activities that reinforce the central concept of the project: that preserving one's place and heritage strengthens the community and improves the quality of lives and livelihoods of all its members.

A number of initiatives have created new employment opportunities. From an oral history of an 84-year-old resident of the community, the Center learned of her daughter, Rosie, the owner and CEO of a telesurvey company in Houston. When Rosie visited the Center and narrated her history for the archives, the interviewers learned that she was planning to sell her company in Houston. A team of students and Francisco Guajardo, from the Center, asked Rosie to relocate her business in Edcouch. They persuaded the school district to give them a building to house the enterprise and the City of Elsa gave the Center a Community Block Development Grant to set up the business. Guajardo reported on this effort at a Rural Challenge Regional Conference in August, 1999:

> We challenged the school to give us a building and the school gave us a building. Then we challenged a number of people in the local area to come through with some resources for computers and other types of equipment. And people have met the challenge.
>
> What we have done during the summer is create an infrastructure for this data center which is about to be launched in the next month. We will be taking contracts from Texaco, Exxon, from state agencies, and from people who want to know and will pay money for information about how the Latino market thinks about them. What do Latinos think about Texaco as they walk to their stations? They want to know because they want to improve their product.

> We have just begun to create those economic opportunities through which we participate in this new economy. It looks like 50 to 100 jobs [in the survey business] all based on the oral history that we did. We did the oral history, we developed a relationship, and we developed another relationship and it became an economic opportunity. If we had never paid attention to this 84-year-old woman, this would not have happened.

A former EEHS student and recent graduate of Brown University, with a degree in business economics and industrial relations, became the manager of Data Traq Data Collection Center in 1999.

Another economic opportunity emerged from the oral history project. A former employee of the King Ranch--which is famous for having been the largest ranch in the world--was interviewed about his life story by students. The King Ranch has also been involved in collecting oral histories for the past 20 years. A town elder who was giving his story to the students contacted someone at the Ranch and told them about the work of the Center and the *Journal*. The King Ranch has numerous oral histories on tape that haven't been transcribed. After learning about the work of the Center, the Ranch contacted Guajardo who negotiated a contract for students to transcribe and translate the King Ranch histories. Word got around that the Center could provide this useful service and three weeks later a professor from Texas A&M requested that the Center transcribe and translate nearly 800 oral histories that have been collected over 30 years. The Center plans to hire 20 to 25 people for a period of three years or more to handle the work. Guajardo said:

> We didn't know that this was going to happen. We didn't know that economic opportunities were just going to fall in our laps. Actually they didn't fall in our laps, you understand, because we created that vehicle through which these kinds of things could happen, creating jobs for kids, creating jobs for people out in the community, in an area that desperately needs jobs.

An additional source of income to students who were doing place-based work was garnered by the Llano Grande Center through the Job Training Partnership Act. Francisco Guajardo, speaking at a Rural Trust regional gathering, informed others of the opportunity to support student work:

> We didn't know about the Job Training Partnership Act when we started [our work]. We found out that the JTPA pays kids to be in your class, to do your [place-based] program. We submitted a proposal to JTPA for $300,000 to do job training, and to pay our kids to be doing data collection, to be doing desktop publishing, to be doing video production. David Rice (a local author) and Lauriano Aguirre, who teach in the high school along with a bunch of our students, have begun to produce movies based on Rice's short stories, and now, based on short stories of some of our kids. And they get paid for it through JTPA.

The success of the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development is making a significant difference in the communities of rural South Texas and demonstrates the far reaching power of place-based learning.

Local History and Technology Project in Rocky Gap, Virginia

The best way to appreciate the work of the Bland County Historical Archives, at Rocky Gap High School in Virginia, is to log on to their extensively linked website at ***bland.k12.va.us/bland/rocky/gap.html***. What began eight years ago as an oral history project in the Foxfire tradition has developed into much more. Over the past five years, high school students at Rocky Gap have set up the Archives, now physically housed in the oldest building in the town. The students have collected, archived, digitized, and displayed the rich local history of Bland County. About one-third of their archival data is now available on the web. The students are collecting more each year and adding it to the permanent archives as they continue to digitize what they have for a much wider audience.

The words of the students, taken from a PowerPoint presentation made at a Rural Challenge/Rural Trust Regional gathering, explain the Archives project. The accompanying pictures and video show, which are not included here, give website visitors a firsthand view of the life, history and current school work going on at Rocky Gap, a Rural Trust site.

The Bland County History Archives

Family/Community/Work/Recreation/War/Church

The Bland County History Archives is a project of the students of Rocky Gap High School in Bland County, Virginia. The collection is housed in the former Honaker Church building which is the oldest extant building in Rocky Gap. The holdings are continuously being added to. The goal of the archives is to preserve the stories of the people of Bland County and present them to the public in a variety of ways. Many of the stories are of the last people to have been born and raised in a real log cabin back up a holler or on top of a mountain. These are the unique stories of Appalachia as told by its people.

The Bland County History Archives began in 1993 as an optional project in the Junior American History classes at Rocky Gap High School. There are between 35 and 45 students in the Junior Class in any given year. Enrollment at Rocky Gap is approximately 170 students in grades 8-12. Several years ago the Local History and Technology class was initiated. The purpose of the class is to manage and organize the content of the Archives. The integration of computer technology into the curriculum takes place in a meaningful and valuable way. Students become familiar with word processing, scanning, graphics, multimedia, databases, website design, and much more. There has been a great deal of support from the community. Efforts are underway to expand the project to include the one other high school in order to better include the entire county.

The Holdings of the Bland County Archives are expanding with every school year.

- Over 310 oral history interviews with transcripts
- Over 80 cemetery catalogs[24]
- Over 700 scanned photos
- Searchable Databases (Transcripts, Cemeteries and Photos)
- Award winning website with over 60 online transcripts
- Archives room with all materials in an accessible, organized location

The project's goals have evolved over the years. The philosophy of place-based education and the relationship of community and school have become increasingly important. The goals include:

- To educate young people with a strong, positive sense of place
- To educate young people to use technology to organize and present material that makes a real contribution to the community
- To educate young people to use technology to solve real problems in the real world in real time
- To involve the community in the education of its young people
- To involve the community in a discussion of the future of the community

The students in John Dodson's Local History and Technology class have become historians and archivists. The students reflect on the history of their work in the following excerpt from their website.

The True Story Behind the Bland County History Archives

In the early years there were strange guys and one lonely Mac. Shannon, Brock, and Wesley pose with a Power Mac 6100 and a big screen TV *[photo not included here]*. These guys along with Marybeth and Nancy were archival pioneers. This was around 1994 or 1995. There were others, of course, but we couldn't find any pictures. They are, however, enshrined in the Hall of Fame.

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[24] This work was described earlier in this booklet.

> The content of the archives is kept in the Archival Room in Honaker Hall, but most of the actual work is done in Mr. Dodson's history classroom, room 104, in Rocky Gap High School. It is here that photos are scanned, transcripts transcribed, entries placed into the database, and the web site maintained.
>
> The local history class of 1996-97 pose *[photo not included here]*. Now we have two Power Macs, a scanner, 12 students, and a very bewildered teacher. We are starting to make some progress toward organizing all the material the juniors have collected over the years. We have much to learn about many things. The technical aspects are just part of it. How to organize, collect, store, and collect oral histories is a mountain in and of itself. We are a little school, but we think big. If we only knew what we were doing we would be dangerous.
>
> Well this is 1997-98 and do we have the stuff. We almost have enough Power Macs to go around, and we have a new scanner, digital camera, and all sorts of software that we are trying to figure out how to use. We also have more material to organize and sort. Click here to see an action shot. We have not even begun to organize the photos. Ya'll have no idea. These people are going to accomplish much.
>
> The Class of 1999 is ready to work and there is plenty of that. Stay tuned for updates and new stuff all over. There will be a high school site by the middle of January. Lots of Quicktime Virtual Reality. This group is going to accomplish great things this year and the Archives are going to grow and improve.[25]

The Rocky Gap students involved in this work have provided in-depth stories documented with extensive photography. What follows is a collection of information from the website that shows some of the essence of the project.

> **Looking at the Past While Preparing for the Future**
>
> The history of Bland County is the story of its people. Nothing of great national or international import happened here. People lived their lives. They grew up, they married, they had families, they worked, and they died. Some of their stories have been preserved. This is our history. Family has always been strong in Bland County. It is still strong. The mountains hold us here. They pull us back when we leave. Place and family create home and home holds the heart.
>
> The following links will take you to a few of the interviews the students of Rocky Gap High School have done over the years. Some are just excerpts but many are complete. These are linked from various subject pages also.[26]
>
> x-short excerpt pertaining to a particular subject
> lx-lengthy excerpt sometimes covering several subjects
> c- complete or nearly so
>
> Thelma Akers talks about her life and Rocky Gap. [c]
>
> Andrew's barbershop is talked about by Violee Ferguson, Charles and Junior Akers, and Raymond Stowers. [c]

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[25] In fact, the school website exists now with a virtual tour of the high school and its surroundings.

[26] We provide only an abbreviated listing of the entries. The website should be examined to see the full range of transcribed interviews.

Virgie Bailey remembers life on the farm as a young girl. [c]

Pansy Ball talks about working as a riveter in an aircraft factory in WWII. [lx]

Mary Belcher remembers the early days of the railroad. [x]

Larry Bradley talks about building the tunnel. [x]

Guy Bruce talks about the history of the Bastian Union Church. [c]

Charles and Judy Clark talk about religious ways. [c]

Ralph Clark and Ed Sarver talk about how times have changed. [c]

Danel Earnest remembers the CCC Camp. [x]

Jessie Hart Finley talks about her life and Silver Creek School. [c]

George Harless remembers WWII in the Pacific. [lx]

George Harless talks about carrying the mail in the Rocky Gap-Bastian areas of the county. [x]

Shirley Steele Harless remembers Nebo Church. [c]

Naeko Isagawa Keen was a war bride from Okinawa. [c]

Rick Lane recalls the Glory days of the Champs of '65. [c]

Sam Larry talks about the Persian Gulf Conflict. [c]

Jim Lundy talks about Round Mountain. [c]

Fred Pennington remembers Virginia Hardwood Lumber Company. [x]

George and James Sink talk about Mechanicsburg, farming, and more. [c]

Ora Grey Stowers talks about Liberty School. [c]

Nannie Rose Tiller was postmaster in Rocky Gap for a long time. [c]

The Wright sisters talk about Pinch Creek. [c]

The work of building the archives, as the students have stated, has them collecting oral histories, taking pictures and writing short explanations to accompany the pictures in the archival museum and for the web pages. One of their pages shows the tools contained in the young historian kit: tape recorder, external microphone, cassette tape, AC adapter, and extension cord. They have also developed standard oral history interview questions that students use from year to year, or change as the historical event or time provided demands. Both Mr. Dodson and his students come up with questions that they would like to have answered. There is a general discussion and a set of questions are agreed upon for any given project. The questions are only a support, though, because students are encouraged to let the informants tell their stories in their own way. And, as Mr. Dodson noted, relying too heavily on pre-determined questions doesn't make for a good interview. This year the class is spending more time on interviewing techniques, which are being taught by students who have developed an expertise in previous years.

The project has developed the following Standard Biography protocol to capture histories of individuals or groups who share their stories with the students for the archives. The protocol gives students a lot of questions to work with as well

The project has developed the following standard Biographical Questions protocol to capture histories of individuals or groups who share their stories with the students for the archives. The protocol gives students many questions to work with as well as some very useful information about conducting interviews and collecting artifacts for the archives. It also reinforces social skills that students find necessary when working in the community.

Biographical Questions

Make sure the interview forms are filled out. This does not have to be done until you are finished. A photograph of the subject is nice. Make sure their face fills the view frame. Remember, this is just a guide. You do not have to stick to the order of these questions. Let the person you are interviewing talk. If they get on to something interesting, ask questions along that line. The best interviewing situation is with more than one person present. They will stimulate each other's memories and feel more at ease with the tape recorder.

My name is __________, and I am interviewing ____________________ at ________________. The date is __________________.

1. Where and when were you born?

2. Who was your mother and father? Where were they born and raised? What did they do for a living?

3. Who were your grandparents? Where were they born and raised? What did they do for a living?

4. Who were your brothers and sisters?

5. Where were you raised? What did you do for fun when you were small? What kinds of toys did you play with and what kinds of games did you play? (If they name a game, ask how it was played, and what were the rules.) Did you play in the creeks in the summer? Did you fish? Did you ride sleds in the winter, and build bonfires, and have snowball fights? Describe.

6. What were your chores around the house? Which one was your least favorite? Which one was your favorite?

7. What was your house like? How was it heated? Did you have running water? On what did you cook your food? How were clothes washed and dried? Where did you get your hair cut? How did you bathe? Did you have an outhouse? What was it like?

8. What did you grow in your garden? What was your favorite food?

9. Where did you go to school? What was school like? What did you study? What did you pack for lunch? How did you get to school? Who were your teachers? Did you have any chores at school? How did the teachers make the students behave? Did you ever get into trouble at school? How were holidays celebrated at school? Do you remember any funny stories or pranks that were pulled?

10. How did teenagers court when you were young? Did you go on dates? Did you go to the movies? to town? How did you meet your husband/wife?

11. Where were you married ? What was the ceremony like? Did you go on a honeymoon?

12. What is your spouse's name? How many children did you have? What are their names, and when and where were they born? Do you think it was easier to raise children back then than it is today? Why or why not?

13. What jobs have you held? What was your favorite? What was your least favorite? What about your husband/wife? Have wages changed much?

14. What was Rocky Gap (your community, Bastian, Hollybrook, etc.) like when you were growing up? What businesses were there? What was there to do for fun?

15. What was the weather like? Do you remember any bad snow storms or floods?

16. How did your family celebrate Christmas? Did you have a tree? Presents? What kind of meal did you eat? Did you or any members of your family enjoy handicrafts? Describe.

17. What about Halloween? Do you remember any pranks that you participated in or heard about?

18. What other holidays were celebrated? Fourth of July? Easter? Valentine's Day?

19. Who is the first president that you can remember? Who was your favorite movie star? Do you remember the first movie that you went to see? Where was it? How much did it cost?

The following questions are dated. In other words, the person you are interviewing is probably too young to remember or even to have lived during the time of some of the questions. Question #20 requires the subject to be at least 90 years old. #21, at least in their 80's. #22 and #23, about 70 or so. #24, close to 60. The idea is that you do not want to insult someone by asking a question about something that happened before they were born.

20. Do you remember WWI? Did anyone in your family have to go? Did your family support the war? How did others feel about it? Do you remember when you heard it was over? Did people celebrate?

21. What were the 1920's like? Do you remember anything about President Harding? The Teapot Dome Scandal? Do you remember when women gained the right to vote? How did you feel about it? Did you like President Calvin Coolidge? What about Hoover? Were your people Democrats or Republicans?

22. Do you remember when the stock market crashed? Did you think it was going to affect you?

23. What was it like during the Great Depression? How did you feel about President Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal? Do you feel he helped the country during hard times? Did any of his programs, like the WPA, PWA, or CCC, help the people of Bland County? Why did some people oppose or support FDR? Do you remember when FDR died? What was your reaction?

24. When did you first get electricity? How did it change your life? When did you get your first radio? What was it like? What were some of your favorite shows? When did you get a telephone? How did it work? What were party lines? When did you first get television? What were some of the first shows you watched? How has TV changed things?

25. Do you remember where you were when you heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor? How did people feel about it? Did anyone in your family have to go fight in WWII? What was it like during the war at home? Was there rationing? Did everyone support the war? Where were you when you heard the Germans had surrendered? What was your reaction when you heard the atom bomb had been dropped and the Japanese had surrendered?

26. How did people around here feel about President Truman? Did people support the Korean War? Did any of your family have to fight in the Korean War? How did you feel about President Eisenhower? Were the times good in Bland County during the 1950's?

27. What did you think about President Kennedy? Where were you when you heard that he had been shot? How did you feel?

28. How did people feel about President Johnson? Did any of your family fight in the Vietnam War?

29. Do you remember much about President Nixon and Watergate? What did you think about that?

30. What kind of shape is the country in today in your opinion? Have things changed for the better or the worse?

31. Is there anything else you would like to add about life in Bland County? Is there any advice you would give young people today?

One of the class projects focused on the history of the churches in the area. Another created an oral history of Dry Fork, an African American community in Bland County. The Dry Fork community had initially been represented in only a few interviews of relatives because there were few African American students attending Rocky Gap High School. Several years ago, however, the Dry Fork community, along with several others in the mountainous area of southwest Virginia that is Bland County, came under the eye of the regional power company. The American Electric Power Company decided to route an enormous 765 KV power-line through Bland County, cutting the community of Dry Fork in two. The specter of a large buzzing, spitting and popping power line traversing this small, well-established community mobilized a number of citizens to protest the company's planned route.

One of the ways that Appalachian communities can argue in opposition to development is to show that a proposed change would alter a cultural attachment to the area. This can be established through analyses usually conducted by anthropologists at area colleges and universities. But when a cultural anthropologist from a nearby university, who had conducted several cultural attachment studies earlier, heard about the incredibly short time frame allowed for the study, she indicated that she could not responsibly undertake the study for Bland County. Thus, it was left to concerned citizens to mount their own campaign against the power company.

It was then that John Dodson and his junior historians collected nearly 20 interviews of Dry Fork residents. They also worked with a local genealogist who began tracing back some of the main families of Dry Fork. The interview schedule for the Dry Forks Oral History project was developed from the standard biographical questions, adding particular ones referring to the cultural experiences of African Americans in Bland County. The additional questions are the following:

Biographical Questions
The Dry Fork Community

1. When did black families first move into Dry Fork? Where did they move from? Why did they move to Bland County? What were the names of these first families? Whom did they buy the land from? Were they all farmers? When did other families come in?

2. Where did the black people of Dry Fork do their shopping? Where did you go to the doctor? Were there ever any black owned businesses up Dry Fork? Who owned them and when were they operating? How did blacks and whites get along up Dry Fork?

3. During segregation, where did black children go to elementary school? high school? Did the Bland County School Board treat its white and black schools equally? When did black

> children first go to Rocky Gap School? Was there ever any trouble during desegregation in Bland County? Who were the first blacks to go to Rocky Gap School? Was there a great deal of prejudice and discrimination in the county? Were there places black people could not go or be served? Where? Was it better in Bluefield? In what way and why? Did any people up Dry Fork take an active role in the Civil Rights Movement? Was anyone active in the NAACP? What did people think when they first heard of Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement?
>
> 4. What kind of shape is the country in today in your opinion? Have things changed for the better or the worse? Do you think that opportunities for black Americans have improved over the years? Why or why not? Do you think blacks and whites get along better today?
>
> 5. How has Dry Fork changed over the years?
>
> 6. What has been the center of the black community over the years in Dry Fork? Do you think the black community is as close as it has been in the past? Why or why not? What do you see in the future of Dry Fork?

The fates of Dry Fork and the power line have yet to be determined. Hearings on the matter were recently conducted. John Dodson, the history teacher and advisor to the Bland County Historical Archives project is also a member of the Planning Commission of Bland County and an opponent of indiscriminate development of the area that he and others believe destroys the rural way of life in the mountains of Virginia. Armed with the oral histories of Dry Fork which help to document the culture of the area, Dodson and others are hoping to persuade the courts to honor their appeal to the proposed power line running through the county. A portion of Dodson's letter to the judge, which appears on the website for Bland County, illustrates the spirit behind the study and the importance of preserving place in communities of rural Appalachia, an area continually threatened by powerful outside interests who expect little resistance to their plans.

> ... The community of Hicksville is affected by this line. It has just recently ended a long, costly fight to keep a medical waste incinerator from locating in its midst. Now Hicksville has to fight this power line. It appears to be an unending fight to preserve one's quality of life...
>
> As a member of the Bland County planning commission I have been impressed at the awareness of the people of Bland County to issues of the environment and quality of life. The County is one of a few rural counties that has adopted zoning. Property rights and individual rights run deep in the blood of mountain people. It was not without much soul searching that the conclusion has been reached that sometimes we have to prepare and act collectively in order to defend and preserve our way of life. This power line brushes our zoning restrictions aside with all the consideration of a horse swishing a fly off its backside.
>
> Our Comprehensive Plan has been shattered. All our efforts to develop this county in a way which allows responsible growth and protects and preserves our environment and quality of life have been destroyed....

Students in Mr. Dodson's History and Technology class are learning about their history and culture and they are learning the tools to preserve it. The importance of their unique place in the world is learned in school and in the community and prepares them for public action to sustain their community. Madeline Gibson, a Rural Trust "Circuit Rider" who visits and works with teachers engaged in place-based curriculum in the Appalachian area, said about the work of schools like Rocky Gap, "We are committed to a place. This is more than place-based education."

GOING FORWARD

We began this guidebook with some definitions of learning in place and provided a brief historical context to the pedagogy of place work that is central to the Rural Trust's mission. We have also provided some starting points and a number of examples of activities, projects and larger curriculum planning from Rural Trust sites and some other related sources. Within these examples, numerous additional starting points were suggested.

In closing, however, we wish to raise some ideas about keeping the work going. We draw here on our focused conversations with a number of teachers, Rural Trust Stewards and various Circuit Riders and Network Coordinators who provide considerable ongoing support to teachers engaged in place-based work.[27]

Keeping the Ideas and Purposes Large

In one form or another, virtually everyone involved in the work underscores the importance of having place-based work emanate from large ideas and purposes. The deepest, most influential work that we have seen was a result of students, teachers and community people working together to do something that truly mattered, that had a genuinely large purpose. It might be a newly rekindled energy that comes from reclaiming one's heritage or enhancing an aspect of community welfare. It might grow from the realization that local actions of a similar quality across the country are part of a larger movement to renew rural communities and an endangered way of life. It might also relate to the construction of a local museum or to cleaning local streams of pollutants or producing community newspapers or creating new employment opportunities. In almost all cases, it is about more than the usual school work. The power of becoming stewards of the land and rural livelihoods creates coalitions among previously isolated schools and businesses and students and adults outside one's family. This large focus can, we have seen, restore confidence in local institutions and ignite nascent leadership capacities across age groups and walks of life. In its largest sense, this place-based work can be a means for restoring democracy and collective action on behalf of communities. In that sense, it has an inspirational quality.

Learning from Others

The focus on large ideas and purposes, which we outline above, is often a catalyst for broadening conversations within schools and across schools. In the best of circumstances, teachers and students learn from one another. It is helpful to maintain ongoing conversations about place-based work, strong materials and resources, enlarging schools.

The Rural Trust has been particularly good at bringing teachers, students and community people together at regional and national gatherings to exchange information about their work around place. Such sharing of information has been vital to the growth of place-based work.

We have seen, over the years of the Rural Challenge/Rural Trust, that efforts related to place can, and often do, begin small, with only a few participants initially becoming engaged. Starting small with attention to expanding the work, deepening it, however, requires additional critical elements--community involvement and student commitment.

Community Involvement

Conversations with local agencies, business people and service providers that focus on what they perceive as community needs, or what they would like students to know and be able to do when they complete their schooling brings schools and communities to the table as co-participants in designing educational goals for young people. When adults can see the school and its students as resources capable of adding value to the community, the possibilities for enlarging the educational experiences of its youth multiply.

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[27] We wish to thank, in particular, Julie Canniff, Candace Cochrane, Judy Cross, John Dodson, Chuck Erickson, Liza Finkel, Madeline Gibson, Regina Headden, James Lewicki, Sylvia Parker, Barbara Poore, David Ruff, Elaine Salinas, Lauren Sosniak, Mary Stangohr and Deena Zarlin for their contributions to this guidebook.

Engagement in real work that involves a variety of adults, in and outside of classrooms and schools, enhances student development as it serves a purpose in the world. If what students do, reflect on, and write about remains only within the confines of the school, designed solely by school staff, or defined only by state or district mandated curriculum standards, the results may be interesting but the work will lack the energy that results from doing work that really matters. Rural Trust work that has had the most powerful implications has involved a strong sense of community interest and ownership.

Student Commitment

One of the key principles underlying the work of place is that students should be engaged at all levels of this work. No longer considered merely the clients or beneficiaries of teacher instruction, they participate in the design as well as in the carrying out of projects. Over and over, place-based educators tell us that "kids are capable of doing a lot of work." A Rural Trust Steward remarked that while it is still relatively rare to have students fully participating at all levels of this work, "when kids are behind the work, there's more longevity and its deeper." She also noted that "if you have a teacher who is receptive to having students take on a different role, he or she can be more effective than three or four teachers together." Another spoke of the flip side of this: "for teachers, it takes time to learn to continue being in control but not controlling." This speaks to the heart of a pedagogy of place.

Many teachers have shared with us that involving students in planning place-based work, working around their interests and intentions takes time. Starting slowly, building upon previous experience while scaffolding new experience and helping students understand the possibilities help bring students fully into the work.

We close this guidebook with a testimony to the power of place-based learning by Madeline Gibson, who has supported, as a Circuit Rider, schools and teachers engaged in place-based curriculum in the Appalachian area. She has witnessed, first hand, the experiences of deepening one's knowledge of place in rural schools throughout Appalachia. She wrote the following concerning the power of learning about and honoring one's place.[28]

The Power of Place-Based Learning

by Madeline Gibson

> I have always heard the saying that "Knowledge is power." I must now adapt that statement to "Knowledge about place is powerful and empowering."
>
> Schools have always been full of knowledge. Facts, statistics, historical events, words, definitions, and abstract ideas have always filled the texts used by teachers and students. And yet, in my experience, most of this knowledge floated around for a while and then became used and discarded like the graded work of students thrown in wastebaskets. For most, this knowledge did not live and, at best, intimidated students by its bulk. Teachers, too, were overwhelmed by the task of motivating students to attack and master the knowledge.
>
> But teaching by using place is different. Teachers and students work as a team to make decisions and to learn interesting facts about places and people they know. Learning becomes exciting and people (teachers, students, and community members) become eager again. This excitement and eagerness is evident in every school I visit where place has a part in the curriculum...

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[28] Gibson describes her vantage-point as a Circuit Rider as follows: "I am in a unique position to be both a part of the Network and outside of it. I can see the changes inside each school and I can see the strength of the Network resulting from the changes."

Teachers feel good about what they are doing. Students feel good about what they are doing. How often do we hear these statements? Most of the time, teaching is equated with struggle. Test scores, standards, motivation, attendance, energy and money are parts of the struggle. Curriculum involving place does not eliminate these problems, but it does make learning more fun and more applicable to the student and teacher....

[T]he most important reason for my love of the role I have played in the [Rural Trust] is straight from my heart: we add value. As an Appalachian child myself (many years ago), I never felt value in myself, my life, or my place at school. My family was very important to me and gave me my personal values. But my school took my language (my dialect) and forced me to change; my school had no books relating to my place; and the outside world was glorified to be so much better than where I lived. At school, I learned to be ashamed of my speech, my family's customs, and my heritage.

I do not blame my teachers. Many times they were educated elsewhere and had suffered because of their language, customs and heritage. I think they were trying to help us adapt and not be hurt as they had been.

But, in doing so, they taught me that I was not good enough as I was.

Our students in [Rural Trust] schools will not feel what I felt. Their language is valued. Their family customs are valued. They write papers, create videos, and do oral histories. They value their families. They research the history of the places in which they live, and they see the connections between yesterday and today. History is real and the knowledge they gather is alive.

And the power is within. The people (community, students, and teachers) gain knowledge and use the knowledge. They gain skills and develop talents and abilities. They feel pride. This great invisible current of energy fills the Network and makes its worth immeasurable. I am so appreciative of being able to be a part of it.

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The Rural School and Community Trust (Rural Trust) is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to enlarging student learning and improving community life by strengthening relationships between rural schools and communities and engaging students in community-based public work. Through advocacy, research, and outreach, the Rural Trust strives to create a more favorable environment for rural community schooling, for student work with a public audience and use, and for more active community participation in schooling. Founded as the Annenberg Rural Challenge in 1995, the Rural Trust today works with more than 700 rural elementary and secondary schools in 35 states.

The Rural School and Community Trust
808 17th Street, NW Suite 220
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 955-7179
Website: www.ruraledu.org

The Rural School and Community Trust
Research and Evaluation Office
14 Story Street, 2nd floor
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
(617) 495-5191